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LORD OF THE RINGS

First review of Gandalf's magical mauler!

SMACKDOWN: HERE COMES THE PAIN
TONY HAWK UNDERGROUND
PRINCE OF PERSIA
DRAGON BALL Z
RAINBOW SIX 3
MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!
MAX PAYNE 2
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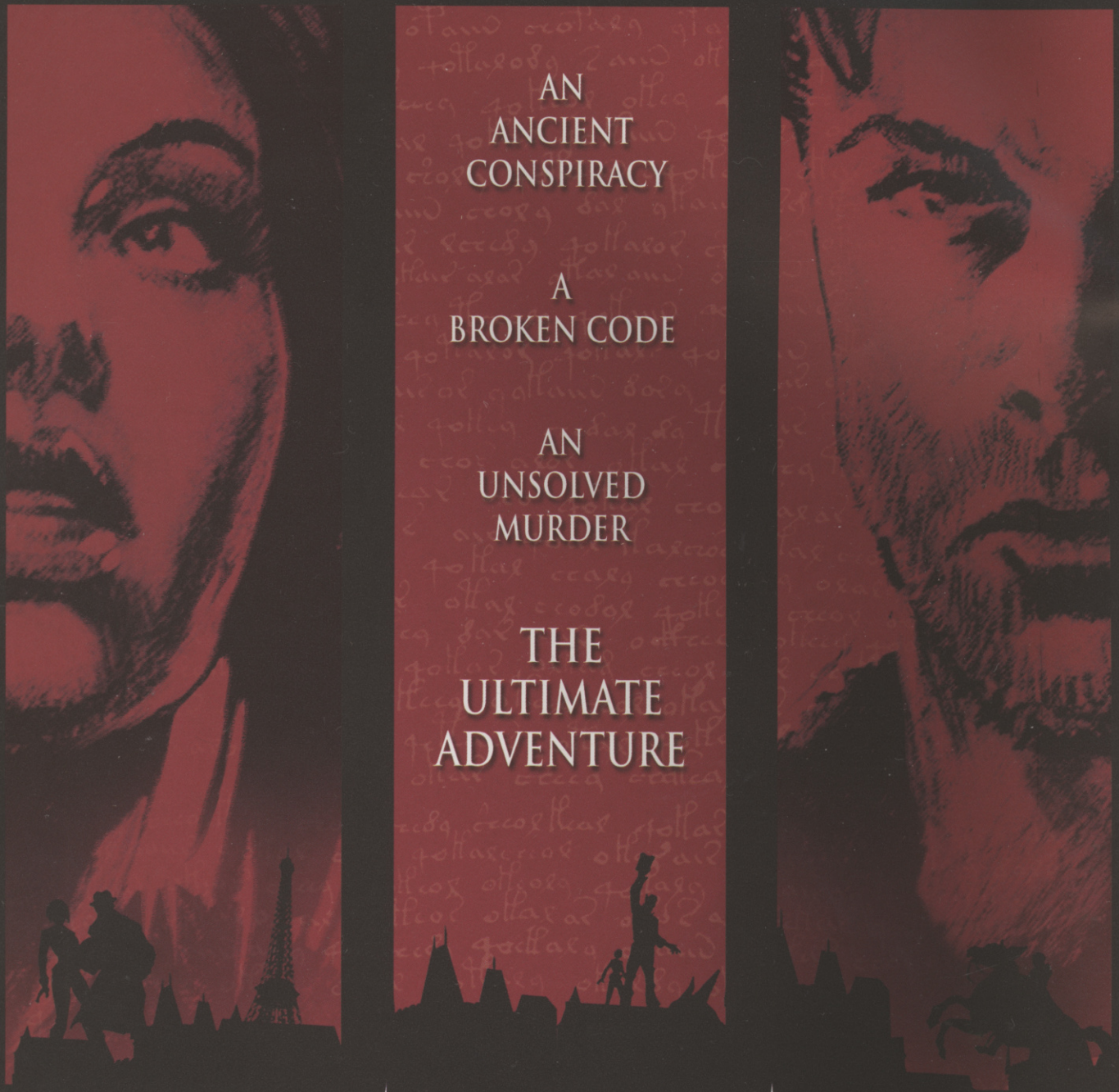

BROKEN SWORD

THE SLEEPING DRAGON

'THE REBIRTH OF A GENRE' - 87% PC GAMER

9/10 OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

PC CD ROM

XBOX

PlayStation 2

REVOLUTION

THQ

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HAVE A MERRY, SCARY XMAS...

What will you be doing on Christmas Day? Lopping off some girl's head in Manhunt? Or maybe carrying out a True Crime? Either way, just make sure your pressie sack is bulging with the best games this yuletide.

But what should you ask for? Well, it's more a case of what *shouldn't* you ask for. There're loads of crackers fattening up this month's bulging reviews section, from the brilliantly exotic Prince Of Persia to the gritty knee-grazing action of Tony Hawk's Underground.

And if your tight-assed Gran reckons games cost too much, shove this month's Xmas Buyer's Guide in her face and point out the best games you can buy on a budget. It's even got all the best console bundle deals in there, so aim high and ask for that second console you've always been gagging for.

Armed with this issue of CVG, your Christmas is guaranteed to be a cracker, even if you don't get all the games you want. So when you unwrap the videogame turkey your auntie got you, remember it's got to be better than watching the Christmas special of EastEnders...

Alex Simmons Editor

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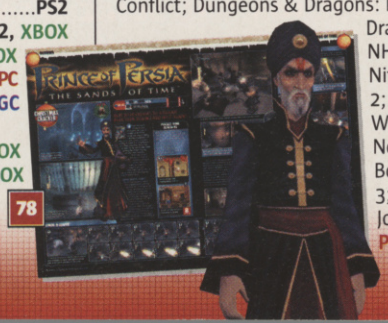

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An alternative list of festivities for the 12 days of Christmas. Be afraid...

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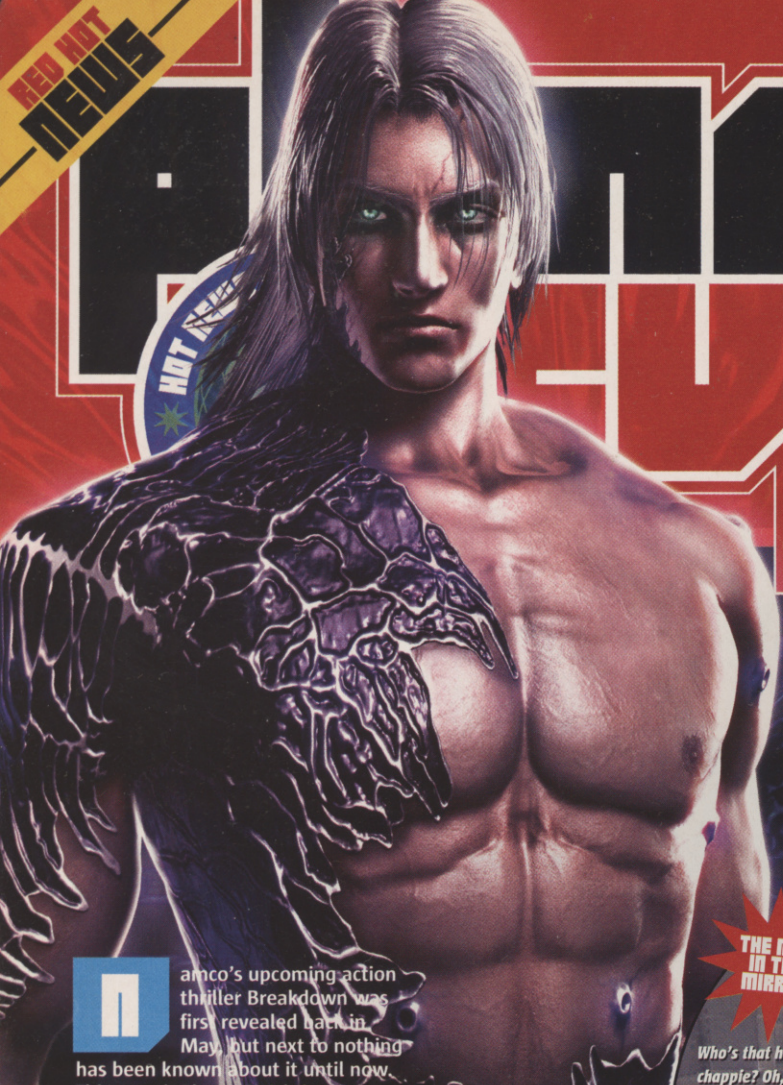
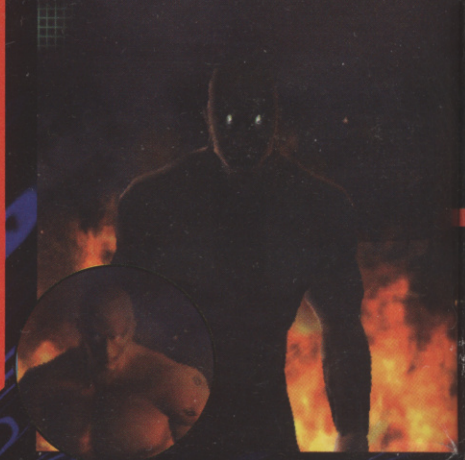




ATTACK OF THE BONEHEADS

You come up against tons of fearsome enemies, like these hairless mutant evil doers. They've got terrible skin and they will not be stopped until you provide them with a soothing body balm remedy, or something.

EXCLUSIVE

HAMBURGERS AN

BREAKDOWN: NAMCO'S HARD-HITTER AIMS

Namco's upcoming action thriller Breakdown was first revealed back in May, but next to nothing has been known about it until now. This month Planet CVG brings you the exclusive lowdown on what to expect, along with a stunning batch of never-before-seen screenshots.

Categorising Breakdown is no easy feat. All the action takes place in first-person, but it isn't just a straightforward gun-toting romp. Sure there's tons of bullet spaying mayhem to enjoy, but Namco's new game messes with the first-person formula and the results are *very* impressive.

You get to engage in explosive martial arts battles, eat hamburgers, probe dead bodies and run along walls like in Prince Of Persia. There's nothing ordinary about it, and that's why it's set to take Xbox by storm when it thunders into stores next year.

PEOPLE IN GLASS HOUSES

Of all the upcoming Xbox games we've seen up and running, this easily ranks as one of the best. The gunfights look blinding and the scenarios are wicked.

There's one bit where you and your foxy female partner are trapped in a corridor lined with windows. An attack helicopter hovers outside, shattering the glass as it attempts to gun you down. Admittedly we've only got looks to go by at the moment, but these weapons-based set pieces look every bit as impressive as any of

It's not all just fists and karate kicks. You'll need to master the art of heavy weaponry and bullet-based combat if you're to survive many of Breakdown's intimidating scenarios

Who's that handsome chappie? Oh, it's you! Practise your moves in the mirror

When you take punishment the screen goes all blurry and disorientating

The camera sways as you fire out jabs, hooks and acrobatic martial arts kicks. His head hasn't been punched off, it's just snapped back out of view

the team

SAY HELLO NICELY TO ALL THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE THE MAG

Alex Simmons
EDITOR
CURRENT FAVES
- Pro Evo 3
- Mario Kart: Double Dash!!
- True Crime

Dear Santa,
For Christmas I would like the equipment needed to build my self-designed weapon, the Lucas-trator – a massive midair ordnance airblast missile with the capability of destroying Skywalker ranch and thus preventing Lucas from releasing any more cruddy Star Wars movies. If innocents are also killed, so be it. All my love, Alex

Pete Walker
DEPUTY EDITOR
CURRENT FAVES
- LOTR: Return Of The King
- Prince Of Persia
- True Crime

Dear Santa,
Next year I hope to be the leader of my squadron in the Kettering division of the Territorial Army. Until recently, Sgt Thick was leader of the battalion, but he met with an accidental live round while on exercise in Desborough. Nasty business. Therefore I was wondering if I could have some large guns for Christmas. Yours, Pete

Lee Skittrell
REVIEWS EDITOR
CURRENT FAVES
- Prince Of Persia
- Tomb Raider (PSone!)
- Snake II

Dear Mr Claus,
For Christmas I would like an end to world hunger, as well as peace on earth and goodwill to all men. Oh, and also I'd like a whacking great bazooka to take out any slow-assed muthalovin' commuter who gets in my way when I'm travelling home to sunny Surrey. Hey, butthead, can't you see I'm in a hurry here! Lots of love, Lee

Mike Cooper
NEWS EDITOR
CURRENT FAVES
- Tiger Woods 2004
- Space Invaders
- Pro Evo 3

Dear Santa,
I hear that you're extra-generous with the kids who've been good all year. Therefore I'd like to inform you that this year I have helped ten old people across the road, saved a baby from a burning house and helped thrash out a Middle East peace agreement. In return I'd like a Maserati and some skank hos. Yours, Mike

NEWS NUGGETS

UNMISSABLE BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM ALL OVER THE PLANET

NEW GTA NEXT XMAS

GTA IV is in the pipeline but it's years away. But we can confirm another GTA game will be out first. It'll most likely use a modified version of the Vice City engine, and will be on PS2 at the end of 2004.

STOP PRESS

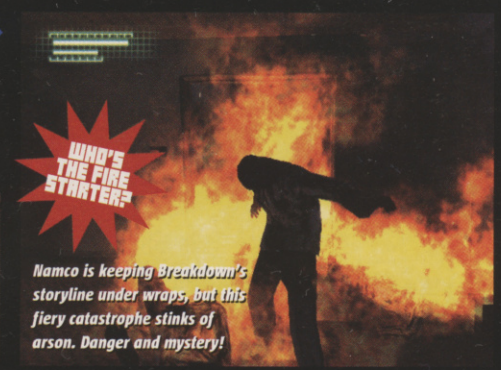
SONY STUNS THE WORLD!

WE'VE GOT THE FIRST IMAGES OF PSP, AND IT'S THE SEXIEST BIT OF KIT YOU'VE EVER SEEN!

TURN OVER NOW!

A CASE OF THE MUNCHIES

Unlike most first-person games where you walk over something and it disappears, in Breakdown your character interacts with every object. Even when you pick up food such as a hamburger to replenish your health, it'll be brought towards the screen intact and move away with a bite taken out of it.



Namco is keeping Breakdown's storyline under wraps, but this fiery catastrophe stinks of arson. Danger and mystery!

AID HAND GRENADES

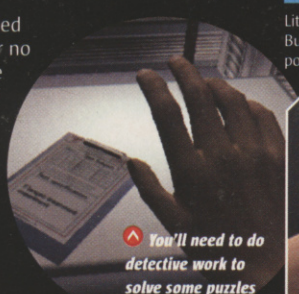
TO BREAK THE MOULD

Halo's shrapnel-studded showdowns. However no matter how swish the shooty stuff is, it's all the awesomely original hand-to-hand combat that really packs the biggest punch.

KNOCKOUT KING

A fist speeds straight towards the screen. Crack! A muscly mutant has just nailed you in the chops with a plum haymaker. You double over woozy, and see your knees buckle as you sway around in an effort not to hit the deck. He moves in for the kill but you manage to dodge, countering with a stylish series of jabs and gut punches, topping it all off with a flying spin-kick that sees the camera rapidly rotate 360 degrees as your foot sinks into his face. We've never seen anything quite like it, and can't wait to experience this jaw-dropping combat first hand.

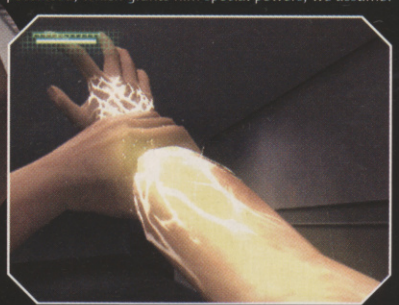
Make sure to revisit Planet CVG over the coming months for all the updates on what is all set to be an Xbox classic.



You'll need to do detective work to solve some puzzles

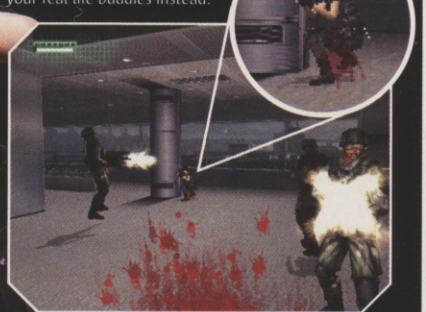
CALL AN EXORCIST!

Little is known about Breakdown's mysterious main man. But from this screenshot it's clear that his arm becomes possessed, which grants him special powers, we assume.



THAT'S A GIRL

That sexy little speck in the distance is your partner. Many of Breakdown's situations see you teaming up with this elite lady companion. However Namco is yet to reveal whether you'll be able to play through the game co-operatively with one of your real-life buddies instead.



BLOOD WILL TELL

SEGA'S SAMURAI HOPES TO CUT NINJA GAIDEN TO RIBBONS

First look

■ Based on a manga comic by Osamu Tezuka, the fella responsible for Astro Boy, Blood Will Tell follows the adventures of Samurai Hyakkimaru. As in

SHARP AS HELL

Ninja Gaiden you'll get to lop off enemies' limbs with your mighty blade Kill Bill-style. BWT is only on PS2 and is set for UK release early next year.

■ Unlike Ninja Gaiden BWT isn't just a solo affair. You can choose to play co-operatively with another player, who gets to control another character called

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Dororo. Both fighters appear at the same time, and you have to work together to solve puzzles and pass dangerous situations intact.

■ It turns out over 100 different demons and monsters will be making an appearance in Sega's upcoming slicer 'n' dicer. You'll be urged to explore

CREATURE FEATURE

huge 3D landscapes to uncover the mysteries of your past and overthrow evil. We're up for that, and can't wait for the New Year to roll around.

BALDY'S BACK!

HITMAN HIRED FOR NEW KILLING SPREE

Eidos has announced Hitman: Contracts for PS2, Xbox and PC.

The shiny-scalped assassin is preparing for more ultra-violent escapades in Spring 2004, and developer Io Interactive is aiming to deliver a fresh killing experience that will be 'epic and disturbing'. We loved the last game at CVG, so we've high hopes for this third outing, even though the only image available is a moody bit of artwork of Agent 47 and his famous pistolas. More soon!

Graeme Boyd
STAFF WRITER
CURRENT FAVES
- Project Gotham 2
- Gran Turismo 4
- Tony Hawk's Underground

Dear Santa,
For Christmas I would like an end to this feeling I get when I walk down the street. It's as if someone's following me, but when I look around, no one's there. Wait, was that a figure ducking into that alley, or just a trick of the light? Who are they, and what do they want with me anyway? Why do they talk in my head? Love, Graeme

Paul Davies
CONTRIBUTING ED
CURRENT FAVES
- Pro Evo 3
- Pokémon Sapphire
- Soulcalibur II

Dear Santa,
For Christmas I would like more hobbies to add to my current hobby, which is collecting hobbies. If you can't give me any hobbies I don't have, I would like a set of shelves to keep my hobbies on. Of course, it is possible I may begin collecting sets of shelves as a hobby, in which case, thank you for my new hobby. Love, Paul

Jaime Smith
ART EDITOR
CURRENT FAVES
- Pro Evo 3
- Pokémon Pinball
- Zelda: Wind Waker

Dear Santa,
This merry Christmas I would like to be excited about games again. Why? Because for me 2003 has not been a vintage year – it's just been the same old thing. Tired sequels and boring licences. I would like to see games companies taking more risks and releasing more quirky titles, such as Wario Ware and Animal Crossing. Yours, Jaime

Jenny McComb
SENIOR DESIGNER
CURRENT FAVES
- Zelda: Wind Waker
- Mario Sunshine
- Wario Ware (GameCube)

Dear Santa,
For Christmas I would like a pair of socks, a puppy, a pony (so I can ride around London and make friends with mounted policeman), a rabbit, a Raleigh Chopper (so I can hang streamers from handlebars), and a Volkswagen Camper van (so I can go to all the festivals next year and visit seaside towns). All my love, Jenny

Andrew O'Holmes
ACTING PROD ED
CURRENT FAVES
- Banjo Kazooie
- Macintosh OS X
- Warhammer

Dear Santa,
For Christmas I'd like some new words, perferably big funny ones, so maybe I could string them together and write a book. A funny book. And some new CDs too – I've only got half a dozen dog-eared albums which I listen to on repeat and Blazin' Squad's starting to grate a bit.
Cheers big man, Andrew.

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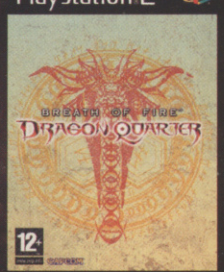
BREATH OF FIRE™ DRAGON QUARTER

From Darkness Comes Light

PlayStation 2



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PlayStation 2

DEAD AGAIN Namco has announced that it is currently developing a sequel to Dead To Rights for PS2 and Xbox. The follow-up will use an all-new graphics engine, and feature new Arcade and Challenge modes. Part two is expected to launch Stateside in Autumn 2004.

THIS MONTH'S BEST RUMOUR

An all-new Pilotwings game is in development for GameCube. But word on the inside is that the aerobatics actioner is bypassing Cube and coming out on its successor console instead.

EMERGENCY! ANOTHER STATE OF EMERGENCY!

State Of Emergency is returning for another riotous console outing. It'll be appearing on PS2, Xbox and PC, with a release date currently penned in for Winter 2004.

Hot or Not?

SONY PSP

You don't have to be a robot to fall in love with a piece of metal. We defy anyone to look at the concept image for PSP and not be totally smitten. Isn't she lovely, isn't she beau-ti-ful!

SPACE INVADERS

A special 25th anniversary edition of the arcade classic is now available in Japan, and comes bundled with an awesome controller peripheral disguised as the original tabletop arcade machine. Check out page 20 for the full story.

GAMECUBE

After Mario Kart, what's there to look forward to? Avalanche? Mario Tennis? Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles? No real big-hitters. Nintendo needs to get its act together. New Mario and Zelda games are a must, and what about some all-new original titles!

FIFA TV ADVERTS

If we see another one of those stupid adverts with Ronaldinho, Del Piero, Henri and those idiot kids prancing about under spotlights we're gonna go mad. Off the ball? Off the telly, please!

NOKIA N-GAGE

Despite healthy sales, word on the street is that N-Gage is doomed. The fact that you have to virtually gut the machine to insert a new game is a fundamental design flaw. Read our full verdict on page 18.

HEAVEN IN YOUR HANDS

WORLD'S FIRST GLIMPSE AT THE FUTURE OF HANDHELD GAMING!

No warning, nothing! Out of the blue Sony unveils a concept image of PSP, and it's nothing short of spectacular.

Up until now all sources had suggested that Sony would only reveal the first photos of its mighty handheld next May at E3. So with a prototype already in the public spotlight it's more than likely that the finished machine will be in attendance at the show. And considering that it's scheduled to go on sale in Japan at the tail end of 2004, there's a good chance it could be playable!

We'll be bringing you monthly updates on PSP in the run-up to launch, so make sure you catch the latest news right here in Planet CVG.

HUGE SCREEN
The backlit 4.5-inch screen is enormous in handheld terms. It's about twice the size of the GBA screen and almost three times the size of N-Gage's. Perfect for playing detailed games and movies on.

BUTTONS UP
Sony's quartet of buttons is in the same arrangement as on the PS2 controller. But they don't appear to be raised, which could make it difficult to get your bearings when you're focused on the screen.

MYSTERY BUTTON
We're not sure what happens when you press this one. Perhaps it's an anti-theft button. Push it and the handheld turns into an N-Gage!

HIDDEN STICK?
In Sony's previous statements it claimed that the PSP would feature an analogue stick. Could this be the first pop-up stick? Maybe you have to press on the centre of the pad for it to ping out.

THE HOLY TRINITY
Power! Start! Select! They're all here. That is all.

PALM PERFECTION
We're not exaggerating when we say that this is the most amazing-looking piece of hardware that we've ever seen. The minimalist styling is pretty damn nifty – we like 'em compact y'know.

IMITATING IPOD
The Dpad appears to be touch-sensitive, much like iPod's control dial. Hopefully it'll be pressure-sensitive as well, just like the Dual Shock's pad.

HIDDEN COMPARTMENTS
Our guess is that a panel will slide out at the back to reveal a slot for the 1.8Gb UMD disc cartridge.

FASHION ACCESSORY
A handy loop has been factored in, enabling you to hang it from your jeans or around your neck like a chunky medallion.

NO PORTS
It seems that the USB, charger, headphone and Memory Stick sockets haven't made it into this conceptual design. Or perhaps they're all hidden, too? That's good design that is...

THE NEWS IN PICTURES

SANTA'S N-GAGE NIGHTMARE

IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE. SANTA'S SACK IS BULGING WITH N-GAGES, BOUGHT ON RECOMMENDATION BY HIS LOYAL AND INCORRUPTIBLE ELVES.

THE ELVES ARE FORCED TO LEAVE LAPLAND. THEY NOW FLOG N-GAGES ON OXFORD STREET TO GERMAN TOURISTS JUST TO MAKE ENDS MEET.

Illustration: Team Artonomy © Computer And Video Games

BANJO IS BACK

NGC STAR GAME

90% NGC

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91% ADVANCE

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CHRISTMAS SPARKLERS

Nintendo is releasing two special GBA Pokémon Super Paks on November 28, just in time for Christmas. Ruby will feature a red Pokémon GBA SP, and a copy of Pokémon Ruby. Sapphire comes with a blue GBA. Each set will cost around £115.

THE DRAC PACK

A game based on forthcoming Hollywood horror biggie Van Helsing is in the works. The movie opens on May 14 in the UK with Hugh Jackman in the lead, and the game will appear on PS2 and Xbox.

Stunning graphics (for a handheld, come on) about the match of a PSone...

First look

CAN IT CONTEND WITH PSP?

BLACK BEAUTY

STUNNING NEW HANDHELD WARPS INTO AMERICA

GAMES TO LOOK OUT FOR

- TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4
- DOOM II
- PHANTOM STRIKE
- STUNTCAR EXTREME
- WARFARE INCORPORATED
- THE GREEN MYSTE
- DUKE NUKEM MOBILE
- NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
- BILLIARDS
- MEGABOWLING
- INTERSTELLAR FLAMES
- RIFLESLUGS-W
- ANOTHERBALL
- SPY HUNTER

The Zodiac portable console has popped up from nowhere, and it's already being compared to Sony's upcoming PSP.

It's easy to understand why. Stylish, practical and powerful, this sexy palmtop plaything has all the hallmarks of a Sony product. The analogue control stick, four face buttons, shoulder triggers and 3.8-inch colour screen share more than a few similarities with Sony's most talked about product. And we haven't even touched on the multimedia capabilities and technical gizmos encased within the Zodiac's black shell.

A POCKETFUL OF POWER

As with PSP it supports Bluetooth wireless multiplayer gaming, and boasts two SD card expansion slots capable of storing up to 1Gb of MP3s, MPEGs, photos or any other data. You can hook it up to your PC and download all sorts of media onto the unit, including movie clips and emulators.

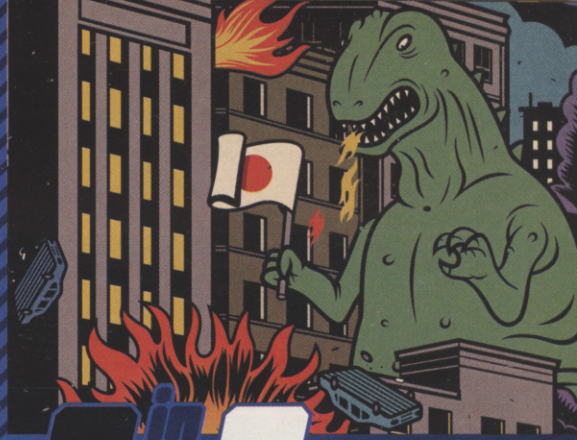
Plus it features an awesome touch-sensitive interface that uses Palm Pilot technology, which sees you negotiating menu screens using a fancy stylus (that's a plastic stick).

GAMES AVAILABLE IN 3D!

This swish new head-turner has a lot in common with the GP32 handheld which Planet CVG ran a story on back in June. However, the Zodiac is more powerful and can handle far more visually complex 3D games, similar in quality to those seen on N-Gage.

So in terms of performance this newcomer isn't going to be quite as impressive as PSP, but with major support from top games publishers like Activision and Midway, the Zodiac has a shot at hitting the big time. Especially as Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 and Spy Hunter have launched alongside the console in the US.

Problem is, it's only available in America at the moment and there are no plans for a global launch. If you want to import one it'll set you back a cool 300 bucks, not including shipping and tax. Visit www.tapwave.com for more information on the most desirable portable on the planet at the moment.



in BIG JAPAN

QUENTIN 'KILL BILL' TARANTINO EMBRACES THE POWER OF JAPANESE SCHOOLGIRLS

Gogo Yubari from Quentin Tarantino's Kill Bill gets ready to kick some ass

Street Fighter's Sakura is one of the most popular beat 'em up schoolgirls. Fans love to dress as her

culture – as game players will surely know, Japanese schoolgirls have been kicking ass for ages.

ROUND 1... FIGHT

From Street Fighter through to Tekken and countless SNK beat 'em ups, the Japanese schoolgirl is a necessary stereotype. Sweet and innocent on the outside, often shy, but put them against an opponent with a samurai sword or throw some fireballs at them and watch how quickly they can turn. We'll get to play as Gogo and The Bride next year, as Vivendi and Black Label Games has acquired the rights to turn Kill Bill loose on consoles.

Kill Bill: Volume 1 opened in Japan a few weeks after it hit Britain, and the country is currently going mad for it. If you've seen the movie you'll know that much of the action takes place in Japan, with Uma Thurman getting to (ha!) 'cut loose' with a samurai sword in a blood-soaked showdown that has sent some people running from cinemas ready to hurl their popcorn.

The ultra-cool limited edition Kill Bill Bearbrick! More on these ultra-cool collectibles next issue

The weirdest part of seeing Kill Bill in Japan is the amount of Japanese schoolgirls in the audiences, still dressed in their distinctive uniforms, watching one of their own give Uma her fiercest fight in the movie. The character of Gogo Yubari, played by Chiaki Kuriyama, isn't new in Japanese

Put some health bars at the top of the screen and this looks like a beat 'em up game

The Sony Vaio U101: the tiny sub-laptop that fits into even the tiniest palms

HANDHELD POWER

Everyone loves Japanese technology's continuing ability to shrink items to previously unimagined levels.

The latest innovation is a step up from PDAs and a step down from a PC laptop. The sub-laptop, as its been called, is backed by major Japanese computer manufacturers such as Sony, Samsung, JVC and Sharp, and embraced by commuters. In a couple of years you could have an online Counter-Strike in your pocket!

JAPANESE TOP-SELLING GAMES

- 1. Atsumare!! Made in Wario (GC) Nintendo ..... 94,263 copies
- 2. Samurai Michi 2: Way Of The Samurai (PS2) Spike ..... 34,189 copies
- 3. Shin Sangoku Musou 3 Moushouden (PS2) KOEI ..... 25,987 copies
- 4. Grand Theft Auto III (PS2) Capcom ..... 23,025 copies
- 5. Tengai Makyou II: Manji Maru (PS2) Hudson ..... 14,564 copies

KILL.SWITCH

UPDATE!

Check your specs, here's new screens of Sony's action thriller in motion, exclusively on PS2...

GT4 PROLOGUE

NEW SHOTS OF CUT-DOWN VERSION KEEPING THE GT ENGINE TICKING OVER

■ The Tokyo Motor Show isn't usually a hotbed of videogaming gossip, but Sony used the event to unveil Gran Turismo 4: Prologue. Jap motor-heads

ELECTRIC BLUE HEAVEN

will get the chance to play this reduced version from December 4, and the price point, about £16, is more second-hand Micra than brand new Skyline.

■ Prologue will feature four full circuits extracted from the finished game: Japan's high-speed, high-tech Tsukuba circuit and Fuji Speedway; the

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD

awesome majesty of the Grand Canyon rally stage and the narrow, cobbled streets and views of the Italian Urban District. Just look at that countryside...

■ Over 20 cars selected from the Gran Turismo showroom are included. From the shots we've seen it looks like you'll be able to try out a diverse

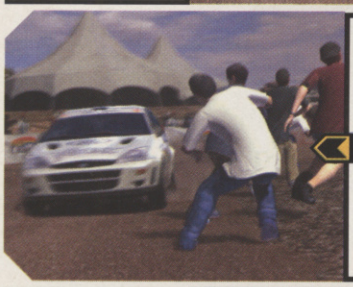
"I STOP FOR NO MAN!"

selection, from dull family-ferrying people carriers to the snarling automotive monster that is Ford's GT40. Check out how cool Times Square looks!

■ It won't just be road racing on offer – the Grand Canyon track will let you shoogle your suspension off-road. Unfortunately we'll have to wait for the

"LET'S OFF-ROAD"

finished version to race online, but Gran Turismo 4: Prologue will at least give you the chance to get used to the enhanced handling model.



■ There's going to be loads more trackside detail like these mental rally fans almost getting minced by a Focus! These extra touches will make the

"OUTTA THE WAY, DILLWEED"

circuits completely believable environments. Powersliding to perfection is going to feel even cooler with spectators whooping you along!

■ Even pit crews will be making an appearance for the first time. We're so excited about the way GT4 is shaping up we might blow our engines. The only

MEET THE WIRE MEN. SCARY

problem is that a European release hasn't been confirmed, so you might have to pick up Prologue on import. We'll keep you posted on developments.

DONKEY KONGA

UPDATE! ドンキーコンガ♪

FIRST BEATS OF INFORMATION REVEALED

Last month we brought you the world's first images of GameCube's upcoming insane bongo beater, Donkey Konga. This month we deliver the first snippets on what you can expect from Nintendo's latest nutcase.

First up we can now confirm that it's a full-on rhythm action game, with multiplayer options for up to four conga-loving contestants.

The drums will come bundled with the game, and just in case you were wondering if they'll fit under the bed, they're 20cm tall and 30cm wide. If, like us, you measure everything in relation to kitchen appliances, that's about the same size as a two-slice toaster.

As for the music you'll be bashing out beats to a range of styles including pop, anime tunes, latin and classical. Nintendo has also revealed that the game will feature a total of 32 tracks. Plus, just as a little sweetener, a remake of Donkey Dong Jr will also be playable as an extra mini-game.

Donkey Konga goes on sale in Japan on December 12 and you'll be able to order it on import for around £40. Not bad considering the free bongos, and if Samba De Amigo is anything to go by it might be worth buying it just as a collector's item as Sega's quirky classic is now worth a fair few bob. However Nintendo UK is still to announce whether Donkey Konga will be coming out over here. We'll keep you posted.

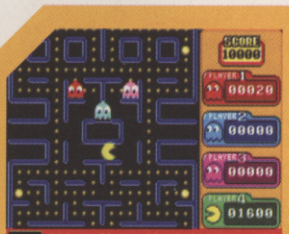
It's not clear if you'll have to bash the bongos with varying levels of power

There'll be plenty of rhythm action, but the focus is mostly on multiplayer fun

This song is called Love Somebody. Sounds a bit mushy for our liking

DONKEY KONG JR REVAMP

Donkey Kong Jr has been revamped 20 years after its original release in the arcades, and appears in Donkey Konga as an extra side game.



1 GBA graphics are identical to the arcade original, except for the scores panel

2 Pac-Man has nicked his look from CVG's very own Cackman – cheeky yellow git

3 Whoever catches Pac-Man gets to control him in the next round

GOBBLER GIVEAWAY

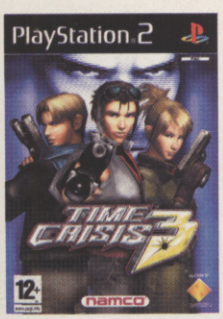
PAC-MAN ON GAMECUBE RELEGATED TO FREEBIE STATUS

When Nintendo first revealed Miyamoto's Pac-Man for Cube at E3 this May it was a very big deal, not just a fun little throwaway project.

Without Mario 128 or a Wind Waker sequel on its release schedule, Pac-Man Vs was expected to be one of Nintendo's major upcoming titles. That's until news surfaced this month that Pac-Man Vs is going to be given away free with copies of Pac-Man World 2 and R: Racing Evolution. Both of which go on sale Stateside in the first week of December, and in the UK early next year.

This somewhat deflates our bubble of excitement, because such a decision is clear proof that Nintendo doesn't have much faith in Pac-Man Vs as a standalone game or moneymaker. Make sure you pay CVG a visit next issue for the first verdict.

bang, bang, you're dead!



fun,
anyone?
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GAMECUBE SALES SOAR

Since Nintendo slashed the price of GameCube to £79 the brightly coloured boxes have been flying off the shelves. During the first week of the price drop Cube sales shot up massively, selling ten times more than before.

EIDOS HIRES KILLZONE CREW

The creators of Killzone are shacking up with Eidos to make an all-new FPS. The collaboration follows Eidos's split with TimeSplitters developer Free Radical, and could result in another monumental blaster. Details are super-secret, but we'll have more in the coming months.

F-ZERO: FALCON LEGEND

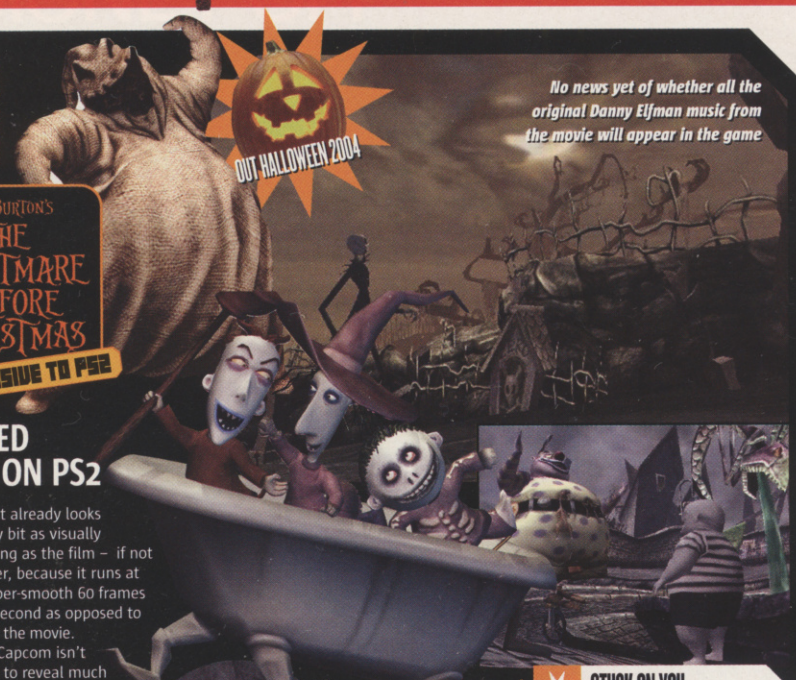
That's what the all-new GBA F-Zero game is called. Nintendo isn't releasing any details, but it goes on sale in Japan on November 28. More news on the UK version soon.

JUMPING JACK FLASH

TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

EXCLUSIVE TO PS2

OUT HALLOWEEN 2004



No news yet of whether all the original Danny Elfman music from the movie will appear in the game

TIM BURTON'S ANIMATED CLASSIC COMES TO LIFE ON PS2

In last month's Big In Japan column we filled you in on how Japanese punters go gaga for anything with Jack Skellington's bony mug on it.

Here at CVG we're massive fans too, ever since the stop-motion animated movie appeared in cinemas just over ten years ago.

It might have taken a decade to happen but development of the game based on the film is now in full swing. Only we've still got to wait until Halloween next year for the global release.

WHAT'S THIS?! WHAT'S THIS?!

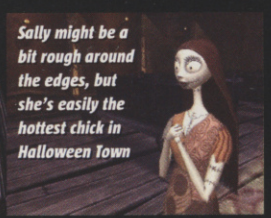
At a recent Capcom press event we got to see TNBC in action, and it already looks every bit as visually striking as the film – if not better, because it runs at a super-smooth 60 frames per second as opposed to 24 in the movie.

Capcom isn't keen to reveal much information at this early stage, but we did manage to prise some gameplay and story details from their clutches.

You play as Jack Skellington. Oogie Boogie has kidnapped your rag doll girlfriend Sally, and you've got to rescue her. You must battle your way through hordes of Oogie's minions using a versatile snot-like shape-shifting weapon called the Rubber Soul. It'll have multiple uses, including the ability to lasso and hurl enemies. Although Capcom would not confirm its other tricks we also expect that you'll be able to use it to knock out enemies, and to perform Indiana Jones-style whip and swing moves.

Halloween Town has been gloriously recreated fully in 3D, as have all the classic characters from the movie. Here's hoping it will play as well as it looks... But you'll have to hold on until next year to find out, when we'll be bringing you the first hands-on playtest.

Jack's slimy killing tool can change shape at any time



Sally might be a bit rough around the edges, but she's easily the hottest chick in Halloween Town

STUCK ON YOU

The Rubber Soul weapon is sticky. Plant it on an enemy and you can pull them towards you, before dealing out the killer blow.

Haul 'em in with your fluorescent snot lasso

EXCLUSIVE SPAWN ARMAGEDDON

SPAWN UNLEASHES HELL ON PS2, XBOX AND CUBE

This creepy end-of-level character looks like Gohma, the spidery boss from Zelda: Ocarina Of Time

Spawn can float across wide gaps using his tatty red cape

R: RACING EVOLUTION

TREAT YOUR PEEPERS TO NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN PICS OF NAMCO'S SPEEDSTER TEARING UP THE TARMAC

It's due out in Japan on Gamecube, PS2 and Xbox

A 'stress meter' lets you take your temper out for air

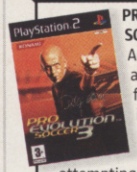
Only two players – no match for GT4

There's a story mode as well as arcade options

Playtime Bullies

FIGHTING FOR SPACE ON THE OFFICE CONSOLE THIS MONTH

PS2 MOST PLAYED!



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

Another month, another set of footie-related injuries. Jaime dislocated his thumb attempting to break the office 360° spin record. Plus Paul broke Alex's shinbone, for beating him seven games on the trot.

XBOX MOST PLAYED!

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

This has to be the Gran Turismo of golf games. We've been playing it day in, day out, since it plopped on our doorstep last month, and we've still only scratched the surface. There's that much in there!

CUBE MOST PLAYED!

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!

Seven years! That's how long it's taken to get Mario back in the driving seat, and we've been racking up the miles to make up for lost time. It's not got F-Zero's thrill factor, but as far as karting games go, DD is the don.

GBA MOST PLAYED!

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE

FF on the go, on a Nintendo console! The Advance Wars-style gameplay suits GBA down to the ground, and means that our thirst for tactical action can remain quenched having completed every aspect of AW2.

PC MOST PLAYED!

HALO

This is the first time that we've returned to the ring planet since clocking Halo on Xbox. We're hooked all over again, mostly because of the LAN multiplayer stuff. Not being able to tell where your enemies are adds a tension that was never present in the Xbox version.

the HOT SEAT

Gavin Raeburn is head of internal development at Codemasters. We caught up with him for a chinwag about Race Driver 2...

Q CVG: Race Driver 2 is being called The Ultimate Racing Simulator. Go on then, how is it ultimate?

A Raeburn: *We want to do for motorsports what Gran Turismo has done for cars. Instead of basing our game around one particular motorsport we want to feature as many real motorsports as we can in one game. This gives a huge variety of racing styles for the player to learn and master. The game features a wide variety of cars, each with their own handling nuances, challenging the player to learn all the different car types.*

Q CVG: What are some of the more unusual cars and tracks featuring?

A Raeburn: *The game features truck racing where the player races the large Ford 9000 truck, and there's the Formula Ford single-seater open wheel car through to the four-wheel drive Land Rover Bowler Wildcat for extreme off-road racing, the Aston Martin V12 Vanquish for Ice Racing and the 1934 Ford Coupe in the Hot Rod racing.*

Q CVG: What can you tell us about the new storyline?

A Raeburn: *The new story in Race Driver 2 features a new cast of characters, the most significant inclusion being that of the player, who now takes on the role of the central character. In the previous game, the player watched someone else's story unfold before them in a third-person perspective. In this game, the story scenes are played out in first-person perspective, creating a far more immersive and personal experience as a result. The narrative is now based upon both the player's performance and the attitudes and agendas of the supporting cast, the result being more palatable for the player than the previous game. The main story arc follows the player's career from a hard-up independent racing team to becoming a top Grand Prix driver, a journey that is supported by a rather rigorous selection process spanning many forms of motorsport. Visually we have raised the bar significantly. By using FMV instead of the real-time playback system employed previously, we have been able to use far more realistic characters and environments, which greatly enhances the experience.*

Q CVG: Race Driver 2 will be Xbox Live-enabled, so presumably the PC version will have online functionality as well? What exactly can we expect from both in terms of online play/features?

A Raeburn: *We want RD2 to set a new benchmark for integrated online features in a PC driving game. While planning the Xbox Live version we thought to ourselves, "Why not do the full monty on the PC as well?" So we did. Therefore, both platforms will be almost identical in terms of online features. Integrated tightly within the game we will support unique player logins, matchmaking, in-game friend lists, real-time voice and player statistics. The PC version also has the added advantage of supporting GameSpy Arcade, giving players more choice. As for actual playability, we have concentrated mainly on improving the car movement prediction under lag, which we didn't do so well in the first Race Driver Game. This in turn improves the car collisions providing a better online racing experience.*

> *"YOU'LL SEE THE CAR BONNET CRUMPLING TO A CENTIMETRE OF TWISTED METAL"*

Q CVG: Finally, what's your favourite thing about Race Driver 2 at the moment, and why?

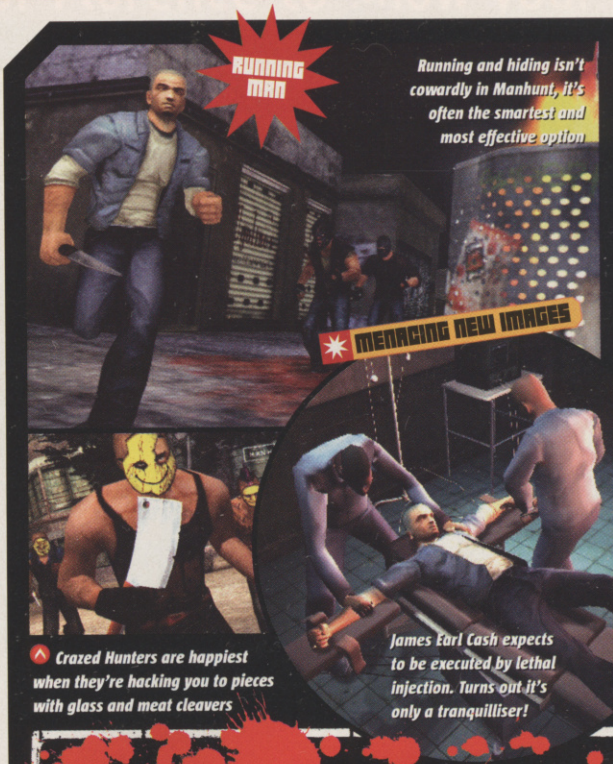
A Raeburn: *This changes from week to week as different elements of the game fall into place. The new car physics were the first thing I was really happy with, but since then the new rendering engine and effects unit has been dropped into place, which looks stunning, and most recently the terminal damage module has just been checked in from our test bed. A head-on crash at 70 miles an hour will now create terminal damage, destroying the front of the car completely. It's going to look amazing. Imagine one metre of bonnet crumpling to around one centimetre of twisted metal, sending shockwaves through the rest of the bodywork, shattering the glass along the way. It's all very pleasing stuff.*

FREESTYLE SOCCER MISSES TARGET

Acclaim's bizarre acrobatic footie experiment was due for release last month. However, news has just come in that Urban Freestyle Soccer won't be available on PS2, Xbox and GameCube until February 2004.

N-GAGE NOKIA
ONE FOR THE CHRISTMAS LIST, OR JUST A LOAD OF OLD BAUBLES? FIND OUT NOW!

TURN OVER NOW!

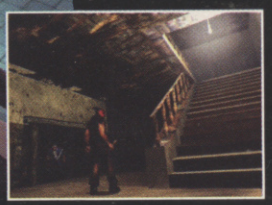


EYE CANDY

This is the first time that a woman has appeared in any Manhunt screenshots. Is she a reporter?

REALITY BITES

Finally a screenshot that actually represents what Manhunt looks like when it's running. Amazing and seriously threatening!



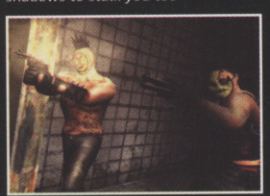
MANHUNT

SPECIAL FORCES

Of all the gangs we've seen so far, this lot look like the crème de la crème. Gas masks, big guns and glowing eyes! They mean business

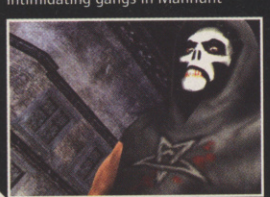
SHADOW MEN

Beware! Hunters aren't as dumb as they look. They often use the shadows to stalk you too



DO YOU DO VOODOO?

This witchdoctor look-alike is a member of one of the most intimidating gangs in Manhunt



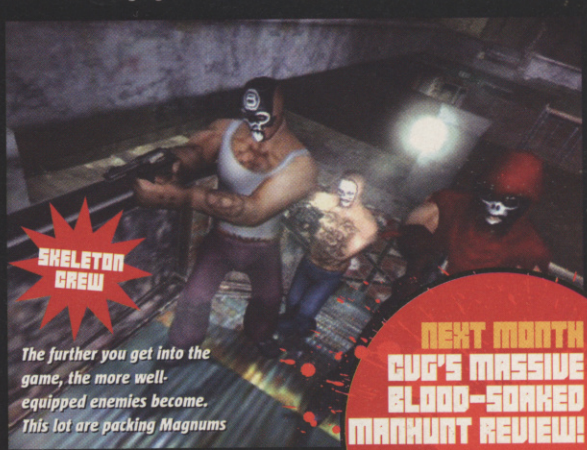
ROCKSTAR KEEPS ITS FEROCIOUS KILLER CAGED UNTIL LAUNCH

As a games mag you'd think that we'd get a copy of Manhunt weeks before it hits the shelves – so we can tell you whether it's any cop or not.

Well, most of the time we would, but Rockstar hasn't given us a review copy. The last time somebody did that was State Of Emergency and the game turned out to be pony. And though, to be fair, Rockstar also did it with the awesome Vice City (so at least they're being consistent), it still gets alarm bells ringing.

Manhunt's out on November 21 but you'll have to wait until next issue for CVG's definitive verdict on PS2's grizzliest Christmas offering.

You don't have to feel any remorse when you're beating up street scum. These white supremacists deserve all they get, so split their wigs good, son



NEXT MONTH CVG'S MASSIVE BLOOD-SOAKED MANHUNT REVIEW!

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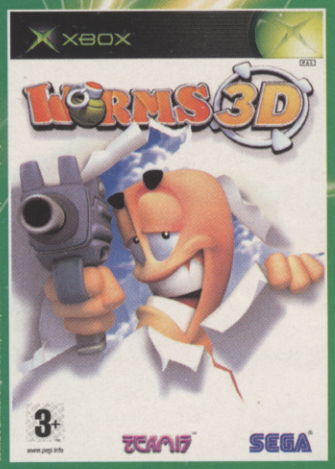

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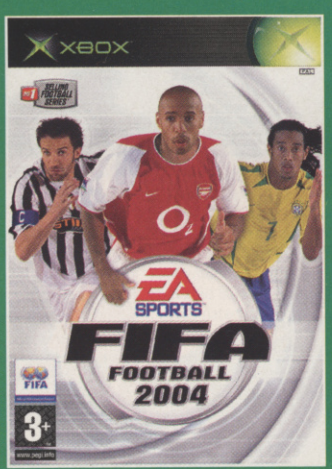

FIFA FOOTBALL 2004

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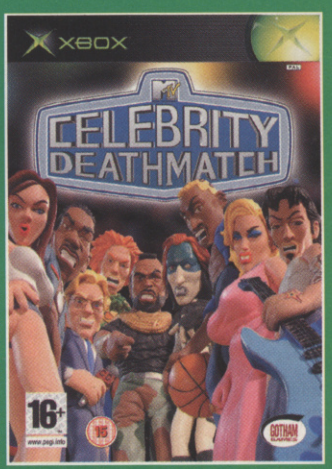

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NEWS SPECIAL

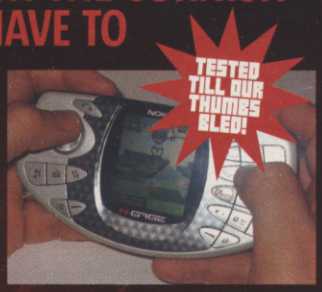
NOT SO N-GAGING!

NOKIA'S N-GAGE HAS ARRIVED, BUT WILL ANYONE CARE? CVG SPENT THE LAST MONTH LIVING WITH THE CORNISH PASTY-SHAPED MOBILE SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO

You've probably seen the adverts. They've been quite hard to escape. "This is where I got further with Lara than anyone else." "This is where I left Kate, Lucy and Michelle begging for more."

Cryptic quotes that are meant to convey the mobile and wireless multiplayer nature of Nokia's new N-Gage. The mobile manufacturer is trying to muscle in on games-loving phone users with the promise of a revolutionary experience.

What you need to know before you fork out your hard-earned dosh is this: is it the ultimate mobile, or an over-priced novelty?



LOOKS ARE EVERYTHING

One of the most important and often overlooked aspects of a new gadget is the appearance. There's no getting round the fact that the N-Gage is ugly. The metallic grill around the screen looks like industrial flooring. And while the N-Gage resembles the old design of the GBA, it's better suited to games, so it makes using the machine as a mobile phone look very silly indeed.

SKINNY SCREEN

The screen is backlit and can display up to 4096 colours. However, the display is also smaller in size than the GBA SP and many would say that it's the wrong way round.

PROCESSING POWER

Beneath the ugly exterior it's certainly a powerful machine that's able to throw around 3D graphics with relative ease. On paper it's more powerful than the GBA, boasting a 104Mhz CPU, with some developers saying it's almost on a par with the PSone.

MP3/RADIO

Let's not forget that the N-Gage isn't solely a games machine. Ultimately it's been designed as a mobile phone that boasts superior games to every rival mobile on the market. It also plays MP3's and includes an FM radio, making it a pocket-sized multimedia centre.

USB PORT

The N-Gage comes with a USB cable and software so you can connect it to your computer to download and manage MP3s.

HEADPHONE SOCKET

There's no external volume control on the N-Gage and it's a lot louder than a GBA, so headphones are a necessity. The unit doesn't take a 3.5mm headphone jack, although it does come packed with an adaptor cable.

D-PAD MISSES D-POINT

Nokia have dubbed the control pad the Rocker, a dodgy name for a dodgy controller. The Rocker can move in eight directions but isn't as responsive as a normal Dpad. You also have to press the centre of the Rocker down for some commands, which is a bit hit and miss.

KLUMSY KEYBOARD

The five and seven of the keypad are raised from the other numbers and are used as the predominant action buttons. The close proximity of other buttons, while offering plenty of other buttons to press if a game needs it, is a hindrance due to the small layout.

HEAVENLY HANDSET OR HUNK OF JUNK?

We've dissected it, but now it's time to answer the burning question of how it actually feels to use as a gaming device.

Despite the shape being similar to the GBA, the N-Gage doesn't have any shoulder buttons. It over-relies on the keypad to control actions in games, making titles like Tony Hawk very fiddly to play

Playing on the N-Gage is a clumsy affair. It's too easy to press wrong buttons. The lack of shoulder triggers is dumber than dumb, and the fact that the Control button is so close to the keypad is moronic. Hit this button and you'll immediately quit a game without saving! N-Gage feels like it's been built by phone geeks without any knowledge of what real gamers demand as standard.

GAME ON, IN A MINUTE

Inserting a game is a piece of cake on most consoles. On the N-Gage it's a fiddly and frustrating experience. Instead of simply slotting a cartridge in to play a new game, you have to switch games via the back door.

To swap a game, first thing you need to do is turn the N-Gage off

Flip the unit over and remove the back casing. For this you need fingers

Next you must remove the battery, allowing you to insert a game

With the game inserted, replace the battery. Again, with your fingers

NOT QUITE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

N-GAGE LAUNCH LINE-UP FAILS TO SET IMAGINATIONS ON FIRE

The range of games available so far include a number of conversions from the PSone, mainly revamps of older titles including the original Tomb Raider and a cool version of Super Monkey Ball. However there are no outstanding original titles to impress us with.

TOMB RAIDER STARRING LARA CROFT

- Players: 1-2
- Dev: Idea Works 3D!/Core Design
- Pub: Eidos

Tomb Raider on the N-Gage is an impressive conversion of Lara Croft's original 1996 adventure. Packing every level from training in Lara's mansion to the Atlantis finale, this is a long and absorbing adventure, spoiled by fiddly controls and a new auto-run feature for Lara where you have to press back to make her stop.

It's tricky to successfully steer Lara through the tombs, due to N-Gage's duff control set-up

PUYO POP

- Players: 1-2
- Dev: Sega
- Pub: Atari

Puyo Pop is Sega's ages old alternative to Tetris and Puzzle Bobble, where you connect blobs of the same colour to clear your side of the screen and dump them onto your opponent. This boasts simple, easy to view graphics and is a great two-player title via the Bluetooth link-up.

SUPER MONKEY BALL

- Players: 1
- Dev: Sega
- Pub: Atari

Super Monkey Ball works surprisingly well shrunken down and the N-Gage version is a real treat. There are 45 levels of devious platforms to navigate and three bonus mini games. The only let down is that it is single player only. It's a shame; this could have been an essential multiplayer title.

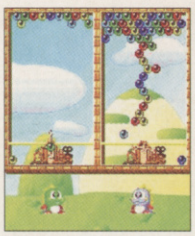
SONIC N

- Players: 1
- Dev: Sonic Team
- Pub: Sega

Sega has a good track record of working on handhelds and Sonic has a habit of appearing on them. Maybe that's why his trademark speed has translated well in Sonic N, even though most of the other N-Gage titles here can be a little sluggish. This is very similar to Sonic Advance on the GBA, another great 2D platform romp for Sonic and pals.

PUZZLE BOBBLE US

- Players: 1-2
- Dev: Taito
- Pub: Taito



Every platform needs an addictive puzzler and the Puzzle Bobble series has proven to be one of the best around. The N-Gage version should have been so much better, but due to a simple design flaw the colours of the spheres are difficult to distinguish,making what should be a pleasure a pain to play instead.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

- Players: 1-2
- Dev: Neversoft/Idea Works 3D!
- Pub: Activision

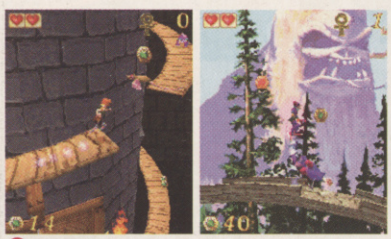
Tony Hawk and nine of his pro skater friends roll onto N-Gage in a tailor made title that combines levels from the first three Hawk games. This is visually impressive although compared to the PSone originals it has stripped-down moves, overly fiddly controls and really misses the absence of shoulder buttons on the N-Gage itself.

Looks-wise this handheld version of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater wipes the floor with its GBA cousins

PANDEMONIUM

- Players: 1-2
- Dev: Crystal Dynamics
- Pub: Eidos

Guide an unfunny court jester and his buxom friend through a colourful platform world full of generic levels and uninspired challenges. The big problem with Pandemonium is that it wasn't great when it first appeared back on the PSone. It works okay on N-Gage, but it's dated gameplay all the way. Spare yourself the headache of a mundane platforming experience.



If you didn't play Pandemonium first time round don't worry, you weren't missing much. One to avoid

Then replace the back casing. Notice how thorough we are being

Now turn the machine back on. You probably know how to do this already

From the main screen, you must then access the game menu to load it

THE MISSING LINK CABLE

Thanks to Bluetooth technology you don't need cables to play against another N-Gage owner.

We've experienced some slow down and frame rate drops when playing multiplayer games, but the ability to play against other N-Gagers on the bus or on a train is certainly appealing.

HOW MUCH?

USING THE N-GAGE AS A PHONE MAKES YOU LOOK LIKE A FOOL

Depending on where you pick up the N-Gage the price can vary by £200.

As it's a mobile phone as well as a games machine you can nab them up in mobile stores, or through your mobile service operator. Via these you can expect to pay £50 for the N-Gage with a contract, or £200 with a Pay-As-You-Go scheme. Of course, if you're under 18, getting a mobile contract is tough. This means you'll have to pay £230 for the machine. However, following poor initial sales of the N-Gage, Nokia is considering a price cut by as much as £100, so watch this space!

THE INTERNET: WHERE N-GAGERS GO TO GLOAT

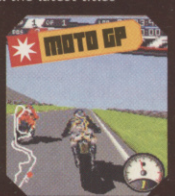
Nokia's N-Nage Arena is an online portal where you can upload high scores, access cheats and other user's ghosts to test yourself against.

In the future Nokia hope to offer level downloads and other new features such as online multiplayer challenges.

COMING SOON TO AN N-GAGE NEAR YOU. ONES TO WATCH!

Here's what you could be playing over the next few months. Check CVG over the coming months for more updates on all the latest titles

If the gameplay is on par with the graphics we could be in for a mobile footballing treat



The fastest thriller for N-Gage is coming

This is easily the best-looking portable shooter we've seen

Mobile multiplayer gun 'n' run action could be a riot

The muppet-faced hero doesn't look as sharp as he did on GBA

Only cowards and trained killers take people from behind

Master all Sam Fisher's manouevres on a mini screen

Hardly a worthy opponent to the Mario Advance games

GAME OVER? NOT YET!

There's no denying that the N-Gage is a powerful machine but is also boasts major design flaws that make it laughable to use as a mobile phone and ill-suited to gaming. At the moment it remains a jack-of-all trades and a master of none. However, a redesign could make it a serious contender to the handheld gaming throne.

XL WARRIORS FOR PS2

What's this? PS2's getting an add-on for Dynasty Warriors 4? Xtreme Legends is a standalone game but also backwardly compatible with DW4. So, twice the fun and at almost half the regular price. You'll be lovin' it in January.

MERRY XMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

Japanese giant SNK Playmore has announced that King Of Fighters 2003 will be hitting arcades at Christmas. It also went on the record to confirm Metal Slug 5 for Spring 2004.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU

AND YOU, AND YOU, AND YOU, AND YOU, AND YOU

SPACE INVADERS IS A QUARTER OF A CENTURY OLD. TO CELEBRATE TAITO HAS RELEASED AN ANNIVERSARY EDITION FOR PS2 IN JAPAN

A limited edition Space Invaders Anniversary bundle has just been released in Japan, and it's one of the coolest things ever.

The game itself is a compendium of all the best arcade versions from the series, and includes new 3D and multiplayer games. You walk into a virtual arcade and can stand or sit at any of the arcade machines in there.

But what makes it a must-have buy, apart from Space Invaders' addictive gameplay, is the amazing peripheral that comes included. It's a miniature tabletop Space Invaders arcade machine. And that's not all. It's a controller! Thanks to clever internal mechanics you can simply pop your PS2 pad inside and use the table's joystick and fire button to play all of the games featured. We'll admit it's a bit daft, but it really is a slice of retro gaming heaven!

You can pick one up for a mere 55 quid from Game Focus in London, and if you can't get there visit their website at www.gamefocus.co.uk where you can order yourself one online.

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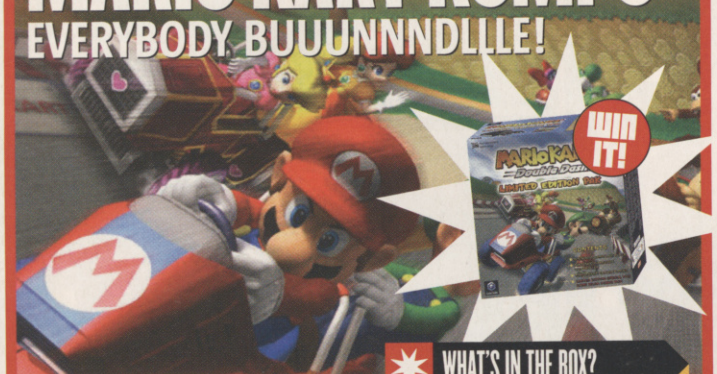
Marvel at the quality craftsmanship. What a beaut!

Pop the hood, and slide your PS2 pad into place

For £55 you get a gold foil-embossed version of Space Invaders Anniversary for PS2, plus arguably the funkiest controller of all time

MARIO KART KOMPO

EVERYBODY BUUUNNNDLLLE!



We're giving you the chance to win Nintendo's new special bundle.

A Cube, copy of Mario Kart DD!!, and a disc with five classic Zelda games could be yours if you can answer the following no-brainer:

What happens when you use a Mushroom in Mario Kart?

- A. .....You get a speed burst
- B. .....You start seeing pink elephants

Send your entries on a postcard to Mario Kart Kompo, CVG, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V OBQ (Deadline for entries: December 17)

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

- One GameCube
- One copy of Mario Kart: DD
- One special five-game limited edition of Zelda: Collectors' Edition

WHAT'S ON THE DISC?

- The Legend Of Zelda (NES)
- The Adventures Of Link (NES)
- Ocarina Of Time (N64)
- Majora's Mask (N64)
- Wind Waker demo (GC)

PS2 EXCLUSIVE!

CAPCOM'S CRY BABY

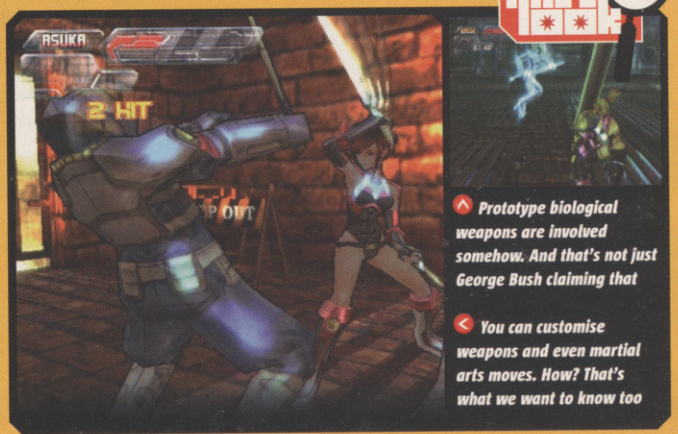
BABES WITH BIG BAZOOKAS? BADA-BING, BADA-BOOM!

It's 2049 and Tokyo's toast after a mysterious accident paralyses the city. But hey, at least everyone gets an extra long lie-in.

Except you, that is, since you're the one who has to get out of bed and find out the cause of the disaster. Pants. And it's probably raining outside too.

Crimson Tears comes from Dream Factory but is being published by Capcom, so it's no great shocker then that it's a weapons-based fighting action game, mixing enormo-sword scrapping with big bazookas and make-mine-a-whopper flame-thrower whuppass. Out 2004 TBC.

First look

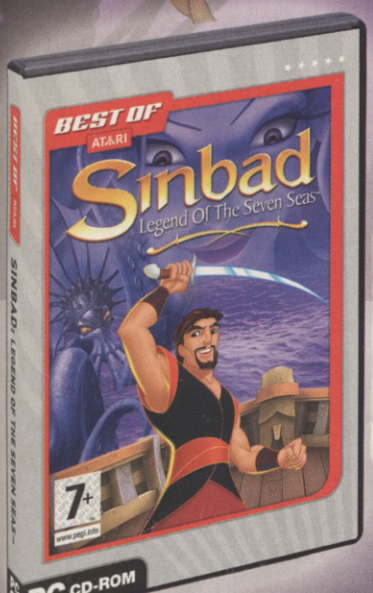


Prototype biological weapons are involved somehow. And that's not just George Bush claiming that

You can customise weapons and even martial arts moves. How? That's what we want to know too

Sinbad

Legend Of The Seven Seas™



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nationalleague

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

BEARS, BOARS OR BULLS?

Last year the capital of England threw up the winner of the National Pro Evolution Soccer Championships, but this year the competition is even fiercer and more dedicated than ever before. The winner will have to battle players from all over the UK, with thousands of pounds of prizes up for grabs and the prestige of becoming the UK's best Pro Evo player. The question is will your area be home to the 2003 Champion?

THE HUNT IS ON!

THE FIRST POTENTIAL PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3 CHAMPIONS HAVE BEEN CHOSEN AND THE SEARCH HAS BEGUN TO FIND THE BEST PES3 PLAYER IN THE LAND.

- EDINBURGH – SCOTTISH LEAGUE
- LIVERPOOL – NORTHERN LEAGUE
- BIRMINGHAM – MIDLANDS LEAGUE
- STEVENAGE – CENTRAL LEAGUE
- BATH – SOUTHERN LEAGUE
- SOUTHEND – EASTERN LEAGUE
- HARROW – WEST LONDON LEAGUE
- LONDON, E4 – EAST LONDON LEAGUE
- CARDIFF – WELSH LEAGUE

THERE COULD STILL BE TIME...

If you haven't already entered, then don't worry. There could still be time for you join the greatest search to find the UK's best player. By logging onto www.pesleague.co.uk every week, you'll be kept informed of all the latest standings and news about the league, including notification of the chance to register if you haven't done already. Windows will open to allow those that missed the first registration period to gain a last gasp entry – but places will be VERY limited so you must check back continuously to see when you'll get your chance.

GAME
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computer and video games

KONAMI

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GUNS FOR GAME BOYS

When most people get bored of their GBA they normally hit eBay. Not so for one kid in America who traded his handheld for a classmate's handgun in the school lavatory. Cops hauled them in after teachers discovered the swap.

FINAL FANTASY XII DELAYED!

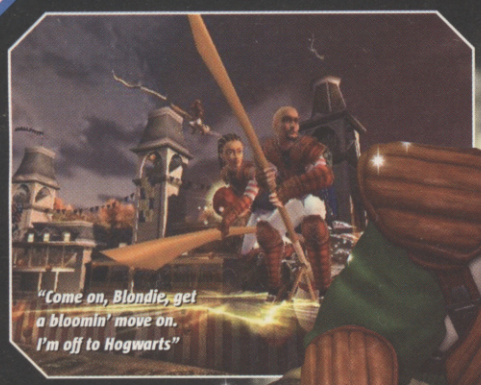
A reliable online source says Square Enix is now planning to release Final Fantasy XII in Japan within either the second half of 2004 or in 2005. So by our estimation that means that it should hit the UK some time next century. Lucky us!

ALL NEW CHARTS PAGES!

Charts

Flip the page to find out this month's UK Top 20. Plus get your hands on the ultimate cut-out-and-keep release dates list, and £3 off any game!

TURN OVER NOW!



"Come on, Blondie, get a bloomin' move on. I'm off to Hogwarts"

WIN A DREAM DAY

STAY AT A LUXURY HOTEL, WATCH QUIDDITCH AND WRITE FOR CVG!

POTTY ABOUT POTTER? CRAZY ABOUT QUIDDITCH?

THEN CVG NEEDS YOU!

WIN A TRIP TO THE HOME OF THE HARRY POTTER GAME, AND BECOME CVG'S REPORTER AT THE FIRST NATIONAL QUIDDITCH TOURNAMENT!

Over the past few weeks, gaming wizards and witches have been busting their Bludgers up and down the country for places in the Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup videogame tournament.

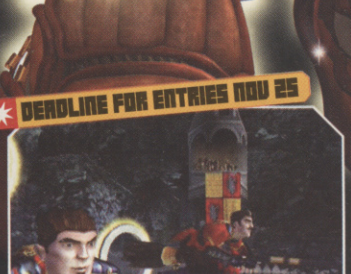
The finalists have all fought their way valiantly into the championship, and only the cream of the Quidditch crop will be in attendance.

The final showdown takes place very soon – or, to be exact, between 5pm and 8pm on November 29 at the 'home of the Harry Potter game' in Surrey. That's where you come in...

BE A CVG REPORTER COVERING THE Harry Potter QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP UK NATIONALS

We're giving one lucky reader (along with one parent or guardian) the opportunity to report on this year's most exciting Harry Potter event. Your magical words will be printed in CVG, plus you'll get to kick back overnight in a posh hotel. All you have to do to stand a chance of winning is send us a letter or email entitled **Harry Potter Wizard Reporter to cvgcompo@dennis.co.uk – along with all the details featured in the accompanying cut-out coupon.**

DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES NOV 25



Don't worry if you're not that great at playing Harry Potter Quidditch World Cup...

...we don't need you to play, just be CVG's man on the spot and cover the event

HARRY POTTER WIZARD REPORTER

If you don't have access to email, send us this form. Be quick because the competition closes on November 25. The winner will be notified shortly after.

★YOUR NAME:..... ★AGE :.....

★50 WORDS ON WHY YOU'D BE THE PERFECT QUIDDITCH REPORTER:.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

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★HOME ADDRESS: .....

★TELEPHONE NUMBER: .....

★EMAIL: .....

Send to: HARRY POTTER WIZARD REPORTER, CVG, 9 DALLINGTON STREET, LONDON, EC1V 0BQ

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Charts

KNOW WHAT GAMES ARE FLYING OFF THE SHELVES AND INTO YOUR CONSOLES, HOW THEY SCORED IN CVG AND WHAT THEY'RE ALL ABOUT. YOU LOT SURE ARE LUCKY!

UK TOP 20 BEST-SELLERS

ChartTrack

The official UK weekly leisure software charts ©2002 ELSPA Ltd, compiled by ChartTrack, with the name ELSPA acting as a link to our website www.elspa.com

POSITION	MOVE	GAME	FORMAT/S	CVG SCORE	SUMMARY	LAST WEEK	WEEKS IN CHART
1	new	PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3 (KONAMI)	PS2	10	Lunchtime. Home time. Quality time with the missus. All are now officially renamed 'Pro Evolution Soccer 3 Time'.	-	1
2	↓	TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004 (EA)	PS2 XB GC PC	8	'Getting wood' means getting a stiffy. So Tiger Woods is like some kind of depraved jungle orgy. Over and over. Ewww.	1	4
3	↓	CLUB FOOTBALL (CODEMASTERS)	PS2 XB	4	It tries, bless its heart, but after playing Pro Evo Soccer this is like kicking around an oversized scrotum full of sick.	2	2
4	↓	EYETOY: PLAY (SONY)	PS2	-	A game so half-arsed they just bung you a camera and make you do it yourself. Only joking – it's an excellent crack really.	3	16
5	↓	CONFLICT DESERT STORM 2 (SCI)	PS2 XB PC	8	Real war? Pah! Just sit at home playing a pretend game, ordering pretend soldiers around. Fun, mind.	4	5
6	↑	FINDING NEMO (THQ)	PS2 XB GC PC GBA	-	You want to see Kill Bill for the fourth time, she MAKES you sit through Finding Nemo. Now the game mocks you afresh.	14	3
7	↑	MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE (EA)	PS2 XB GC	8	Last year's offering nudging back up the chart. Better than this year's effort? Are you lot psychic? Check p87.	13	55
8	↓	SOULCALIBUR II (EA / NINTENDO)	PS2 XB GC	8	Namco sword classic gets spread across all the next-gen consoles, and that makes us oh-so-happy-we-could-split.	5	4
9	↑	FIFA 2003 (EA)	PS2 XB GC PC GBA	7	News of FIFA '04 had loyal fans rushing to the shops, only to get home and realise they bought last year's. Again.	10	52
10	↓	HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED (MICROSOFT)	XB	9	Halo, perhaps the best game to ever appear on any console. Okay, the best FPS to ever appear on any console...	8	52
11	new	JAK II: RENEGADE (SONY)	PS2	8	If anyone says platforming is dead, show them this and Rayman 3 – then leave before they try and make friends.	-	1
12	↓	HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS (EA)	PS2 XB GC PC PS1 GBA	7	The bespectacled boy tosspot celebrates almost 50 weeks in our chart, but you're going down, Potter, and that's magic.	9	49
13	↑	RUGBY 2004 (EA)	PS2 PC	-	The game for people who tie bandages around their private parts and enjoy the taste of another man's thigh.	15	5
14	↓	THE GETAWAY (SONY)	PS2	7	It's got too much swearing, the most rushed, pants ending ever, and, frankly, smells of wee. Quite enjoyable, though.	11	34
15	↓	COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04 (CODEMASTERS)	PS2 XB	9	The Colin McRae Rally series wows petrol heads with improved technical excellence. Everyone else yawns.	12	5
16	↑	LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS (EA)	PS2 XB GC GBA	7	It's such a shame LOTR hasn't had the game it deserves. Will ROTK make amends? See the review on p82 to find out.	17	47
17	↑	JAMES BOND 007 NIGHTFIRE (EA)	PS2 XB GC PC GBA	8	A James Bond game that's just as good as GoldenEye? Nice idea, but until it arrives you'll just have to play this.	24	43
18	↓	FREEDOM FIGHTERS (EA)	PS2 XB GC GBA	8	Sick squad-based shoot 'em up that allows you to dabble in a spot of tactics while you're blasting enemy butt.	16	4
19	↑	RAYMAN 3 (UBISOFT)	PS2 XB GC PC GBA	8	The potato-headed wobbly cartoon that, despite being around for, like, decades, still manages to be pretty good.	-	16
20	↓	INTERNATIONAL CUE CLUB (MIDAS INTERACTIVE)	PC	-	The game for people who are too scared to go to a pub and challenge someone real to a game of snooker.	19	3

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CVG MOST WANTED

1. DRIVER 3 (PS2, XB)

Alex: "PlayStation's gangster number one is back, faster, harder and sharper than ever. Keep looking over your shoulder, Vice City, it's comin' for ya!"

2. HYPER SFII: THE ANNIVERSARY EDITION (PS2)

Jaime: "I've been a hardcore follower since World Warrior. 2D fighters can still kick it in a 3D world, and nothing hits harder than SFII."

3. TRANSFORMERS (PS2)

Lee: "We don't even need rose-tinted nostalgia specs to enjoy this blast from the past – Armada has got to be every (big) kid's dream game. Shame it ain't out for ages."

4. NINA (PS2)

Mike: "Tekken's high-heeled nympho is set to steal the limelight in her first solo battle royale. I can't wait to see how the quirky internal damage system works."

5. OTOGI 2 (XB)

Graeme: "Now, I hate education as much as the next teacher, but I actually learnt something from the first Otogi. Number two should be even better."

READER'S MOST WANTED

Mike Heath is a true gent: "I'd be so awfully grateful if you could publish my list in your spiffing periodical, what!"

1. HALO 2 (XBOX)
"Saw the E3 trailer, and been hooked since. This is going to rule the FPS scene."

2. PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2 (XBOX)
"Played the first one and found it amazing, hopefully this one will be twice as good."

3. ARMED AND DANGEROUS (XBOX)
"Beautiful graphics, death, and bottom humour. What more could you want?"

4. FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES (GC)
"The series has come to its rightful home, and looks as good as ever."

5. HALF-LIFE 2 (XBOX)
"The king of shooters returns. The best FPS ever!"

Send CVG a photo of yourself and list of five games you're most excited about, plus 10 words on each telling us why. **Reader's Most Wanted, CVG, Dennis Publishing Ltd, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ. Email: mailbag.cvg@dennis.co.uk (subject: Reader's Most Wanted)**

MARIO KART ONLINE...

But it's not official or simple to use. You'll need a broadband adaptor, a router, a PC using Windows, a regular copy of Mario Kart: Double Dash!! and a piece of software called Warp Pipe from www.warppipe.com.

LIKKY FOR US

If you like buying import stuff you're probably familiar with lik-sang.com, one of the coolest and cheapest one-stop-shop sites. Well things just got better, because Lik-Sang has just announced that you can now enjoy free shipping on all games.

ROMAN INVASION A LONG WAY OFF

Rome: Total War for PC is being tipped as the greatest RTS game ever created, and developer Creative Assembly has finally given us a rough release date... Autumn 2004, damn it! You'll have to curb your desire to poke spears up Barbarian bottoms for another year.

RELEASE DATES

CVG BRINGS YOU THE ULTIMATE CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP RELEASE SCHEDULE. MARK UP YOUR FAVES AND KEEP THIS LIST ON YOU AT ALL TIMES...

NOVEMBER 2003

XB	SWAT: GLOBAL STRIKE TEAM	NOVEMBER 21
XB	RUN LIKE HELL	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	GLADIUS	NOVEMBER 21
XB	GLADIUS	NOVEMBER 21
GC	GLADIUS	NOVEMBER 21
GBA	WINGS ADVANCE	NOVEMBER 21
GBA	CROUCHING TIGER HIDDEN DRAGON	NOVEMBER 21
XB	GLADIATOR: SWORD OF VENGEANCE	NOVEMBER 21
PC	GLADIATOR: SWORD OF VENGEANCE	NOVEMBER 21
GBA	HARVEST MOON: FRIENDS OF MINERAL TOWN	NOVEMBER 21
XB	HUNTER: THE RECKONING REDEEMER	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	CRASH NITRO KART	NOVEMBER 21
XB	CRASH NITRO KART	NOVEMBER 21
PC	BEYOND GOOD & EVIL	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND	NOVEMBER 21
XB	NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND	NOVEMBER 21
GC	NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	XIII	NOVEMBER 21
PC	XIII	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	HOT WHEELS: HIGHWAY 35 WORLD RACE	NOVEMBER 21
GC	HOT WHEELS: HIGHWAY 35 WORLD RACE	NOVEMBER 21
GBA	HOT WHEELS: HIGHWAY 35 WORLD RACE	NOVEMBER 21
GC	SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS: BATTLE FOR BIKINI BOTTOM	NOVEMBER 21
GBA	SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS: BATTLE FOR BIKINI BOTTOM	NOVEMBER 21
XB	BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU	NOVEMBER 21
GC	BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU	NOVEMBER 21
XB	GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES	NOVEMBER 21
PC	MAGIC: THE GATHERING OF BATTLEGROUNDS	NOVEMBER 21
XB	MAGIC: THE GATHERING OF BATTLEGROUNDS	NOVEMBER 21
PC	TOTAL CLUB MANAGER	NOVEMBER 21
PC	LORD OF THE RINGS: WAR OF THE RING	NOVEMBER 21
XB	STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT JEDI ACADEMY	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	TONY HAWK UNDERGROUND	NOVEMBER 21
XB	TONY HAWK UNDERGROUND	NOVEMBER 21
GC	TONY HAWK UNDERGROUND	NOVEMBER 21
GBA	TONY HAWK UNDERGROUND	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	SITTING DUCKS	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	HARRY POTTER QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP	NOVEMBER 21
XB	HARRY POTTER QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP	NOVEMBER 21
GC	HARRY POTTER QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP	NOVEMBER 21
GBA	HARRY POTTER QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP	NOVEMBER 21
XB	SCOOBY DOO! MYSTERY MAYHEM	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	MAFIA	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	SPLINTER CELL PLATINUM	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	MANHUNT	NOVEMBER 21
GC	BRATZ PARTY NIGHT	NOVEMBER 21
XB	TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2004	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	RATCHET & CLANK 2: LOCKED AND LOADED	NOVEMBER 21
GBA	STAR WARS: FLIGHT OF THE FALCON	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	BOMBASTIC	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	ROBIN HOOD: DEFENDER OF THE CROWN	NOVEMBER 21
PC	LAW AND ORDER 2	NOVEMBER 21
PC	SONIC DX	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	GREGORY HORROR SHOW	NOVEMBER 21
PC	UNIVERSAL COMBAT	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	OUTLAW GOLF	NOVEMBER 21
PS2	ROBOCOP	NOVEMBER 28
XB	ROBOCOP	NOVEMBER 28
GBA	ROBOCOP	NOVEMBER 28
XB	GALLEON: ISLANDS OF MYSTERY	NOVEMBER 28
PC	STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC	NOVEMBER 28
XB	PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2	NOVEMBER 28
PC	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2003	NOVEMBER 28

All plays out in one of the most enjoyable and gripping videogame stories since, er, the last Soul Reaver...

Shiny, happy cars in high-tech beautiful surroundings. And, yes, in case you were wondering, it goes very fast indeed

HOT PICKS

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THESE SIZZLING NEWCOMERS IN YOUR LOCAL GAMES SHACK

Get past the opening and this is a full-on bullet fest that will grip you by the throat and throttle the life out of you...

The game that's going to be filling every Christmas stocking this Yuletide. Get set for a very bloody Boxing Day...

It's the law that if you put the word 'Project' into the title of your game it's going to be VERY realistic. And so it is

GC	1080° AVALANCHE	NOVEMBER 28
PS2	THE HOBBIT	NOVEMBER 28
XB	THE HOBBIT	NOVEMBER 28
GC	THE HOBBIT	NOVEMBER 28
XB	BATTLESTAR GALACTICA	NOVEMBER 28
PS2	NBA 2K4	NOVEMBER 28
XB	NBA 2K4	NOVEMBER 28
PS2	NFL 2K4	NOVEMBER 28
XB	NFL 2K4	NOVEMBER 28
PS2	NHL 2K4	NOVEMBER 28
XB	NHL 2K4	NOVEMBER 28
XB	METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM	NOVEMBER 28
PS2	MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN	NOVEMBER 28
XB	MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN	NOVEMBER 28
GC	MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN	NOVEMBER 28
PS2	ROADKILL	NOVEMBER 28
XB	ROADKILL	NOVEMBER 28
PC	FAR CRY	NOVEMBER 28
XB	FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL	NOVEMBER 28
PS2	LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE	NOVEMBER 28
PC	LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE	NOVEMBER 28
XB	NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2004	NOVEMBER 28
PS2	SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY	NOVEMBER 28
XB	SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY	NOVEMBER 28
PC	SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY	NOVEMBER 28
GC	BEYBLADE: SUPER TOURNAMENT BATTLE	NOVEMBER 28
PS2	SWAT: GLOBAL STRIKE TEAM	NOVEMBER 28
XB	ZANZARAH	NOVEMBER 28
XB	COUNTER-STRIKE	NOVEMBER 28

DECEMBER 2003

PS2	BAD BOYS 2	DECEMBER 5
XB	BAD BOYS 2	DECEMBER 5
GC	BAD BOYS 2	DECEMBER 5
GC	CRASH NITRO KART	DECEMBER 5
GBA	CRASH NITRO KART	DECEMBER 5
XB	ALIAS	DECEMBER 5
PS2	SONIC HEROES	DECEMBER 5
XB	SONIC HEROES	DECEMBER 5
GC	SONIC HEROES	DECEMBER 5
GC	XGRA	DECEMBER 5
PC	PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME	DECEMBER 5
GC	MARIO PARTY 5	DECEMBER 5
PS2	HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE	DECEMBER 5
XB	HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE	DECEMBER 5
GC	HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE	DECEMBER 5
XB	ROGUE OPS	DECEMBER 5
XB	VIETNAM	DECEMBER 5
PS2	GHOST HUNTER	DECEMBER 5
PS2	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: OPERATION SURMA	DECEMBER 5
GBA	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: OPERATION SURMA	DECEMBER 5
PS2	MAX PAYNE 2	DECEMBER 5
XB	MAX PAYNE 2	DECEMBER 5
PS2	THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT	DECEMBER 12
XB	THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT	DECEMBER 12
GC	THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT	DECEMBER 12
GBA	THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT	DECEMBER 12
GBA	MEDAL OF HONOR: INFILTRATOR	DECEMBER 12

JANUARY 2004

PS2	CONAN	JANUARY 16
XB	NHL RIVALS 2004	JANUARY 23
PS2	ARC: TWILIGHT OF THE SPIRITS	JANUARY 30

FEBRUARY 2004

PS2	R-TYPE FINAL	FEBRUARY 6
PS2	FIGHT BOX	FEBRUARY 6
PC	NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL 2	FEBRUARY 20
PC	SOLDNER SECRETS OF WARS	FEBRUARY 27
XB	HEADHUNTER 2: REDEMPTION	FEBRUARY
PC	THE SIMS 2	FEBRUARY

MARCH 2004

PC	MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT	MARCH
PS2	DRIVER 3	MARCH
XB	DRIVER 3	MARCH

RELEASE DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

MAILBAG

SANTA'S SACK

Send your rantings and ravings (or a letter) to: Mailbag, CVG, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V 0BQ. Or email us at mailbag.cvg@dennis.co.uk

CHILLIN' AT THE CRIB

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY THE THREE WISE MEN

DEAR WISEGUYS,

Do you have any news on the F-Zero game for the GBA? I heard rumours about it a while back. Cheers guys, keep up the good work.

Dennis, Daventry

Hey Dennis, Gaspar here, the wisest of the wise men. I can tell you that the new game will be called F-Zero: Legend Of Falcon. It's due October 2004, and you'll be able to customise your vehicle.

DEAR CLEVER DUDES,

Who would win in a fight out of Link, Heihachi and Spawn?

Hoseafidel

Balthazar here, much wiser than that felch-brain Gaspar. He don't know zip. Spawn would win that fight easily! Why you bother me?

DEAR SMART GEEZERS,

What do you make of the Zodiac? Do you think it is a PSP beater? No, didn't think so.

Joe Hodgkiss

Melchior here, clearly the wisest of the wise men. I'm the one who brought the gold, so go figure. And no, Joe, I don't think the Zodiac is a PSP beater, either, but for the full lowdown, check out the news story on p11...

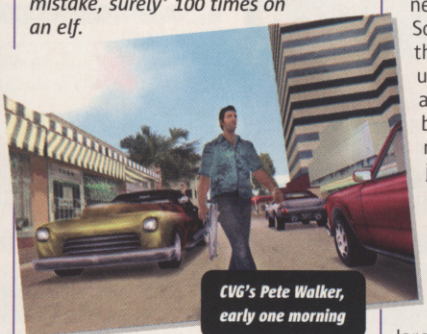
COMMERCIAL BREAK

Hey there must be some mistake, I'm paying for a beer, I ain't paying for a brewery.

Ronald McDonald, via email

CVG *Thanks for this random bit of advertising jingle, Mr McDonald – except you completely SPAZZED IT UP. Since when does 'mistake' rhyme with 'brewery'? Now go away and write 'some mistake, surely' 100 times on an elf.*

Stick to what you know best, Ronald



CVG's Pete Walker, early one morning

GRAND BOY AUTO

I asked some of my friends if there was going to be a new GTA game on Game Boy Advance and my friends said there will be no GTA on the GBA. But I don't believe my friends....

Kirk Stewart, Tottenham Hale, London

CVG *Kirk, your mates are wrong to tell you there'll be no GTA on GBA. THEY'RE SPANNERS. We'd bet our aunt's monkey that one day you'll be able to go Grand on your handheld. When, though? Now, that's another question entirely...*

BROAD-MINDED

How come people need broadband to play on the ethernet? Not many people I know have broadband, so why can't they make a network play adapter for just normal internet? Or they could start a choice where if you have broadband you could get that or a normal internet adapter.

Josh Kellett and Daniel Farrar, Normanton

PS CVG rules. You are the UK's number one multi-format magazine.

CVG *Which is how we know you're talking dribble. Play on the ethernet? Eh?*

THE DAY PERCY SCORED A PATHETIC FIVE

This silly little console war. There are three next-gen consoles, they're all good, let's leave it at that. Nintendo: Always about innovation e.g. cel shading, GB player, this whole GB and GC link-up, and that new controller for Donkey Kong. Sony: The next-gen pioneers. Love their peripherals, brings us wave after wave of adult games, can't be arsed to think up new controllers so just keep the usual one. Microsoft: The token fat console, make games for people with freakishly large hands, in the games market because everyone else is, in it for the money. There's my views, now print them poopoo heads

Percy of the 2nd realm of Kent

CVG *Yes, except they're not really 'views' are they, Purse? They're more 'observations'. Very good 'n' all, but not likely to set the world alight. Your letter gets a measly 5/10.*

Hey, it's the monkey drummer!

IT'S A LONG WAY TO...

This Phantom is a lot of rubbish. You might as well buy a new PC! All it does is play PC games. Granted, it is way more powerful than the Xbox, but who in their right mind (guessing it will cost an arm and a leg) would buy such a hunk of crap when you could buy a magnificent PS2, a so-so GameCube or, dare I say it, a shameful Xbox! I mean, all that it's good for is knocking out a burglar, although you might have to get planning permission for it first *[Here we take leave of Jamie. The planning permission gag's not bad, but after that he just starts wazzing*

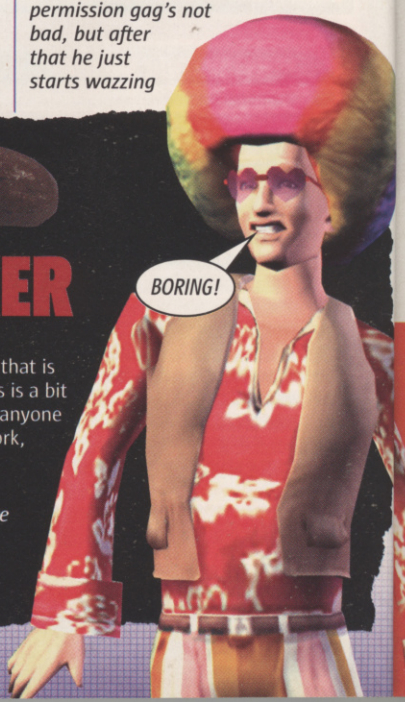
CVG STINKER

REINDEER DROPPINGS

Why doesn't anyone make a game that is just life! Like The Sims but The Sims is a bit boring sometimes, so why doesn't anyone do a game where you get a job, work, get money and travel...

Karim Cairo, Egypt

So you're suggesting a game where you control someone who spends eight hours a day at a computer? And you say The Sims is boring...



on about the Xbox, getting a bit red in the face and making no sense whatsoever.] Thank You CVG, getting that off my chest has been really appreciated!

Jamie Moloney, County Tipperary, Ireland

CVG *No worries, Jamie, and soz about cutting your letter in half, like that, it's just that reading it was like falling asleep on the toilet and waking up to find your bottom has slipped into the bowl and stuck there.*

Look, everybody, it's the GAME logo!

SHE'D BE A DUH BRAIN IF SHE HAD A BRAIN...

Whose bright idea is it to put the money-off games vouchers on the back of interesting articles? Except for last month, I've had to pay full price for games as the voucher has been on the back of an interesting article. I know that CVG magazine is full of interesting articles but surely you could find a space with only a boring advert on the rear side of it. Magazines are not cheap and I like to keep them in good nick. I have been taught never to mutilate my reading materials, but I don't mind chopping out something as long as I'm not losing any important bits. You did well this month. Do you think you could try it every month then I can start using the vouchers and saving myself some money. While I'm here, how come the vouchers have gone from a fiver down to three quid? Is GAME being tight?

Rose

CVG *Rose, darling, your maths sucks. You could have cut out the coupon, bought the game and a new, untouched copy of CVG and STILL saved money. D' and, indeed, Oh.*

For Mike, some Guardian Heroes

CVG'S SERIOUS SPOT

Is it me or are there more white heroes in games than black heroes? I think that black people are taken for granted and are only included as sidekicks in most videogames. This is to show you that there are still many people in the world including games designers who think white people are the only ones in the world, and I for one, being black, am so bloody sick of this! What's going on with the world today? Has Martin Luther King and others failed to reach most people? Please print my letter so others can see how black people are neglected in games.

Tarik Afflick, Streatham, London

CVG *We're all the colour of Shrek in our office, but we still think you've got a good point there, Tarik*

THE GAME'S UP

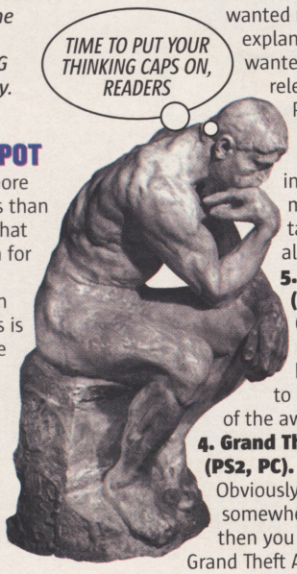
Don't you think GAME is playing a con game? Making you advertise that we all get a fiver off a game if we shop there only to find out when we rip open our mags to claim our voucher - it's only three quid! Please sort it out soon or our Christmas list will be smaller than Scrooges charity fund!

Samantha Lane, Welling

CVG *Hey, how come the only two people to complain about the voucher are girls? Is it because they're future homemakers, already thinking about conserving funds for the family? Or is it because they're the only people with the strength and moral fibre to challenge the might of GAME? Hear them roar! Okay, Sam, first it was our fault to say on the subsciption page you got a fiver off when it was only three. And second it's up to GAME how much they give off a game. Would you rather have £5 off at Halfords?*

DEAR SANTA

I was going to send this letter to the 'Readers Most Wanted' section, but I wanted more room for my explanations. My five most wanted games aren't due for release, but they should be! Perhaps in the future you could have a 'Fantasy Most Wanted' section, in your mag, as I think it's more interesting than talking about games we already know about.



5. Nintendo Vs Sega. (PS2, XBox, PC, GamePube).
I've mentioned this before, but this just had to be part of the list. Think of the awesome possibilities!

4. Grand Theft Auto: Bristol City. (PS2, PC).
Obviously if you're from somewhere other than Bristol then you would want it to be Grand Theft Auto: (Your City).

3. Guardian Heroes 2. (PS2, XBox, PC, GamePube).
Now everyone knows that 2D scrolling beat 'em ups are dead, right? Well I think that's bollocks. Guardian Heroes was the world's best. It had multiple storylines, RPG Elements and over 40 playable characters, and a sequel would surely rock the world of games.

2. Panzer Dragoon Saga 2. (PS2, XBox, PC, GamePube).
When Sega decided to continue the series, they made the stupid mistake of going back to the old shoot 'em up style. The battle system in PDS was one of the best game innovations ever and totally original. Bring back the Saga!

1. Shining Force 4 (PS2, XBox, PC) [GamePube is not worthy]
For any RPG fan no explanation is necessary. Just play SF3 on Saturn and you will agree.

Mike 'Chinagon' Krupa, Bristol
P.S. GamePubes suck ass!

CHRISTMAS PUDDING

Festive cheer from this correspondent! Don't you think Shigeru Miyamoto and Hideo Kojima should go on Takeshi's castle? It would be brilliant, two great games creators on a cool and funny show. Do you know what Takeshi's Castle is? If you don't then you can find it on Challenge (I watch it on Sky Channel 121) and the narrator is Craig Charles! It is a Japanese game show, which is incredibly funny! I have one Zelda postcard left, I used one for a competition for your great magazine. Oh yes, GameCube is better than the PS2 (I have both) and the PS2 beats Xbox which is better than the Virtual Boy. Let me take that back, Virtual Boy beats Xbox (sorry Xbox owners and makers). Virtual Boy gives you a migraine, but Xbox breaks your back! If that is bad, think about the Phantom! Here is my own theory – PSP is called that because of GBA SP from Nintendo, and then they stuck the PlayStation part in and voila! PSP.

Craig Shipton, Crewe, Cheshire

CVG *Readers, this letter is what it's like to live in Paul Davies's head. A mad, bad but nevertheless endlessly entertaining place to be.*

SOME GIBBERISH

In response to Naomi's letter (issue 265), she said that Yugi lost to Joey and really just rubbed it in Deathblade's face and held her head high in triumph. Well, sorry to burst your bubble, but Yugi did not lose to Joey, Joey used the effect of his magic card to control Red Eye's Black Dragon and attacked his life points which meant the match was a draw. And Deathblade, maybe if you weren't such a know-it-all we wouldn't have had to start this argument.

Killon Freehill, N Ireland

MORE GIBBERISH

In issue 265 Naomi said that Deathblade was wrong about how Yugi has lost once to Seto in the Duelist Kingdom and that the strongest card in the game is Exodia. But Deathblade was actually right (in some way). The issue was printed three months ago and then they aired the first Yu-Gi-Oh episodes, and so Deathblade couldn't possibly know that Yugi lost the second time and that the strongest card in the game is Exodia (that again was aired three months ago, so he didn't know that).

Kenneth from Estonia

YET MORE GIBBERISH

How many times will you people print incorrect information about the strength of Yu-Gi-Oh cards from little newbies who don't know how much attack power the Winged Dragon of Ra has? (For those who care it is equal to the monsters you sacrifice followed by being able to pay all but one lifepoint and increasing it by that amount). Anyhow, I will put straight how many times Yugi Moto has lost currently in the anime. One. That's it. Not two, just one: he beat Joey when he was being mind-controlled by using mystical rift panel and turning the Black Meteor back against Joey. The most powerful cards are: Exodia Necros and the three Legendary Dragons. Exodia Necros can't be destroyed and is summoned by removing all Exodia pieces from your graveyard after they have been destroyed. The three god dragons are currently being featured in the Japanese anime. Yugi has Timaeus, Seto has Critias and Joey has Hellmos.

Chris Hicks

Now, readers, is that clear? And let's end this Yugi willy waving. Please.

computer and video GAMES
DENNIS PUBLISHING LTD.
9 DALLINGTON STREET, LONDON EC1V 0BQ
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★ Deputy Editor ..... Peter Walker
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CONTRIBUTORS
(Words) Steve O'Hagan, Ellie Gibson, Alex Huhtala, Barny Zoeller, Maura Sutton, Matt Wales, Dave McComb, Stephen Daultrey, Martin Korda, Paul Anglin, Martian, Dean Scott, Alex Pullman, Gavin R. Rubber Wart, Dave Woods, *(Subbing)* Rosanna Negrotti, *(Design)* Mike Newson, *(Illustration)* Team Artonomy

★ CVG Editorial ..... 020 7907 6565 (Fax: 6566)
★ Existing Subscriber Enquiries 01454 642443 or cvg@cisubs.co.uk
★ Online Subscriber Service ..... www.subsinfo.co.uk
★ Production Executive
Stuart Slade 020 7907 6054
★ Senior Production Executive
Kerry Lambird 020 7907 6056
★ Publisher
Tara Leathers 020 7907 6508
★ Group Sales Director
Ian Westwood
★ Deputy Games Group Advertising Manager
Richard Benett 020 7907 6670
★ Promotions Manager
Emily Ford 020 7907 6672
★ Senior Sales Executive
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CHALLENGE CVG

★christmas special

MARIO KART Double Dash!!

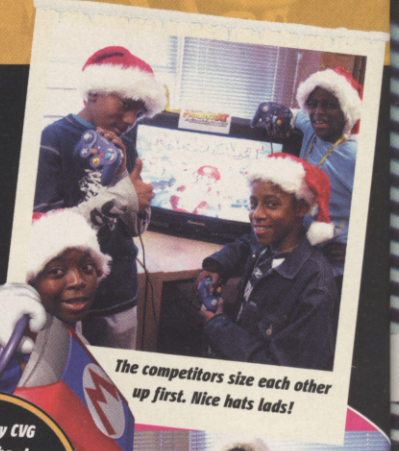
THE CHALLENGERS...

MICHAEL ROSS HALL

RASHARN MCLEOD

ROCHSHANE CLARKE

SHIMON LAWRENCE


The competitors size each other up first. Nice hats lads!

Four lucky CVG readers get the chance to try out Mario Kart Double Dash!! and win a Santa's sack of Nintendo goodies!

The proud lads with their wins. Rumours that we nicked it back are lies
The pressure was so intense that Micheal Ross almost lost conciousness

IT'S CHRISTMAS! A TIME FOR GOODWILL, FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY... THEN LEAVING THEM CHOKING IN YOUR DUST!

Challenge CVG is usually all about the glory of victory, the sweet tang of bragging rights, and the respect you earn by demolishing your opponent over and over again. But sod that, it's Christmas time.

And as we all know, the important thing about Christmas is that you get loads of free stuff from people you barely even acknowledge the rest of the year! Way-hey!

So, in the festive spirit, we got together with the lovely fellas at Nintendo to offer four of our lucky readers the chance to win a stonking great Nintendo bundle by competing in our Double Dash!! grand prix! Gentlemen, start your engines!

The challenge took place in CVG's new and improved games room

1 ROUND 1: MARIO CIRCUIT

After loads of practice rounds and jostling to get closer to the screen, the lads nervously awaited the start of the challenge. "I've got to win that Cube!" shouted Rasharn, streaking to an early lead. Rochshane and Shimon struggled to get to grips with the slidy karts. Michael challenged hard, but a last-gasp slip on a banana skin gifted Rasharn the victory.

The determination's edged into their faces as they hustle for first place

XMAS COMES EARLY!

2 ROUND 2: PEACH BEACH

"You haven't won yet!" muttered Shimon through gritted teeth as the second race started. The lads stayed tightly packed through the drifting sands, but as the track became littered with shells and skins, Rochshane and Michael fell behind. Neck-and-neck down the home straight, Shimon's yell of "Come on!" was enough to edge his kart into first place!

The lads were delighted at how much fun Double Dash!! was to play

3 ROUND 3: DESERT SANDS

The quicksand and tornadoes of the desert track gave everyone a headache, but as the final lap loomed it was Rasharn and Shimon having a tense ding-dong battle. Whoever took the chequered flag scooped the star prize. It looked like Rasharn had it, until Shimon desperately launched a red shell which homed in like a guided missile. Only metres from the line Rasharn spun out, allowing Shimon to nip the narrowest of victories!

CHALLENGE CVG WINNER ★ WINNER: SHIMON ★ CHALLENGE CVG WINNER

He's smiling here, but Graeme was so jealous he locked himself in the toilet with the prizes

THE FINAL RESULT: COME ON SHIMON!

After a quiet third place finish in the opening race, Shimon relied on both his karting skills and a Bowser-sized chunk of luck to secure two successive chequered flags. "YES! I can't believe I've won a GameCube!" he yelled, face beaming with Christmas cheer.

Rochshane, Rasharn and Michael drove hard but in Mario Kart Double Dash!! anything can happen. Still, they weren't disappointed – they all scooped a sweet bundle of Nintendo goodies!

"Don't worry guys," said Shimon, "You can all come round to my house and we'll have a Double Dash!! grand prix of our own!" Hearing such a beautiful expression of brotherly love, we almost started to believe that Christmas is about more than getting free stuff. Nah...

THE PRIZES!

Our mates at Nintendo generously donated a staggering heap of Mario Kart goodies for our Christmas Challenge. Thanks guys!

■ FIRST PRIZE:
A Nintendo GameCube, a copy of Mario Kart Double Dash!!, a copy of F-Zero GX and an extra pad!

■ SECOND PRIZE:
A copy of Mario Kart Double Dash!! and F-Zero GX and a GameCube pad!

■ THIRD PRIZE:
A copy of Mario Kart Double Dash!! and a Nintendo T-shirt!

Santa sprained his back bringing this huge bundle into the office!

There he is! Santa! He's shaved, lost a bit of weight, and talks with a Scottish accent!

COME ON! HAVE IT!

CHALLENGE CVG ★on tour

Since we've been too busy sharing the spirit of Christmas we've had to give our skills a bit of a rest. It gets hard destroying people all the time.

Next month Team CVG is back on tour, so send in the coupon and get taught real proper. Come on, you *know* you want us to come knocking on your door. Pussies.

★HELLO, MY NAME IS: .....

★BUT YOU MUST CALL ME: ..... [nickname] ★AND I'M: ..... [age]

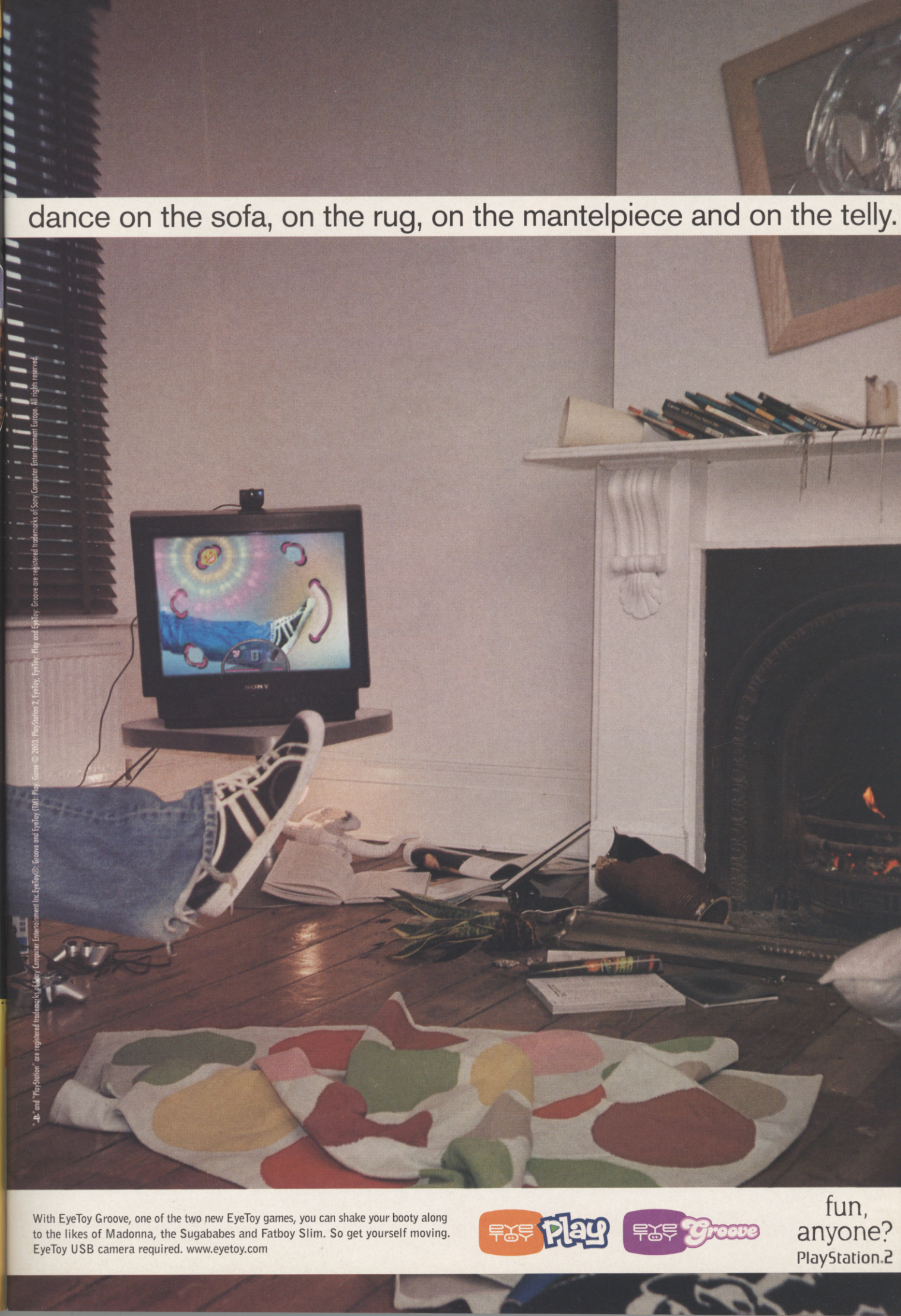
★I AM THE BEST AT: ..... [game name]

★MY ADDRESS IS: .....

★DAYTIME TELEPHONE NO: ..... ★EVENING TELEPHONE NO: .....

★EMAIL: ..... ★PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE: .....

Send to: CVG Reader Challenge, CVG Magazine, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ


dance on the sofa, on the rug, on the mantelpiece and on the telly.
With EyeToy Groove, one of the two new EyeToy games, you can shake your booty along to the likes of Madonna, the Sugababes and Fatboy Slim. So get yourself moving. EyeToy USB camera required. www.eyetoy.com
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Pummel opponents with over 15 weapons

Race 18 mind-bending tracks

Battle for bragging rights in multiplayer mode

Battle for the chequered flag with Crash, friends and foes. Use missiles, bombs, tornadoes and more to pass or blast up to 4 friends in multiplayer mode. Race to win... using any means you can.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

PLAYED TILL THE SHELL POPPED OFF!

PUBLISHER
KONAMI
DEVELOPER
KONAMI
OUT FEBRUARY '04

ONLINE GAMING

IN A NUTSHELL

All four jive-talkin', wise-crackin', ass-kickin' teenage turtles busting out some serious button bashing ninjitsu. Six levels, 35 stages and all the baddest bad guys from the show like Hun and Shredder.

AVAILABLE ON
NINTENDO GAMECUBE

ALSO ON
PS2, XB, PC

WWW.KONAMI.COM

COWABUNGA! THE HEROES IN A HALF-SHELL ARE BACK AND WE'RE FIRST WITH THE VERDICT!

You've got to admire the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Even with all those raging hormones, unscheduled boners in public places and volcanic skin problems, they still find time to kick bad guy ass. And then they go and stuff themselves with pizza and burgers. That's our kind of superhero.

So when we caught a glimpse of the new Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles game at E3 we were so excited we almost produced a turtle's head of our own. Now the release date is looming we've jumped on the game quicker than the lads devouring a deep pan pizza. The good news is we had a shell of a time! (Sorry dudes, that was totally weak).

WHO'S THE TURTLE?

You get to choose your favourite Turtle from the four brothers. Maybe you like the power and attitude of Raphael and his Sais, or the discipline and focus of Leo and his twin Katana blades, or

As the game progresses, the Foot Clan henchmen you fight get tougher, like these ninjas

TURTLES COUNT IT OFF!

Leonardo

Leonardo is the natural leader among the group. He's focused, intense, and maybe a little too serious, but he can cut goons to ribbons with his twin Katana blades.

Donatello

Donnie is more interested in mucking about with computers than honing his fighting skills, but when the jobbie hits the fan his Bo stick is a formidable weapon.

Michelangelo

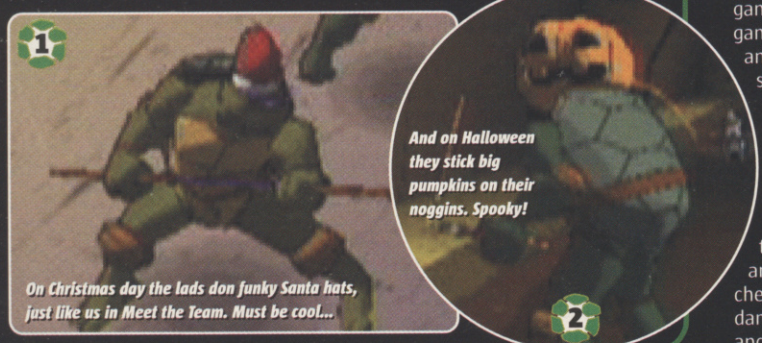
Mikey is a bit of a hyperactive nutcase and that's why we love him. Like his favoured weapon, the Nun-Chuks, he's a flailing force of hyperactive energy.

Raphael

Raph is aggressive and hot-headed. Sometimes it gets him into trouble, but his strength and the power of the twin Sais are a great addition to the team.

TURTLE TIME!

One of the nice little touches we noticed about TMNT is the date-sensitive costumes. If you're playing on Halloween or Christmas Day (or cheekily fiddle with the system clock!) then the Turtles will wear appropriate headgear!



maybe you're into nerdy Donatello and his wooden Bo stick. But if you're anything like us you'll choose Nun-chukin', joke-crackin, butt-smackin mentalist Michaelangelo.

Each character plays differently, so your choice does have an effect on the game. Once you've completed the game with one, doing it again with another will open up a whole new set of challenges.

And there are *plenty* of challenges. The opening levels pit your skills against chomping Mousers and club-wielding Foot Clan thugs – pure Turtle fodder. But wait until you come up against the Clan's elite ninja death squads, and by the time you face up to cheese grater-clad Shredder you'd damn well better have mastered the ancient art of whupass.

I'M THE TURTLE!

Don't sweat it, though. They're not called Ninja Turtles for nothing. Dishing out some smackdown is as easy as battering a button. If you want to really switch on somebody, finish off your combo with a fierce blow or uppercut them into the air and juggle them like ripe oranges.

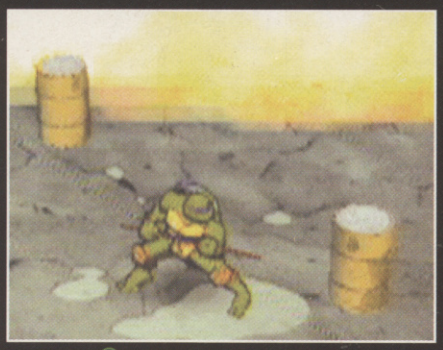
Okay, it's not the most complex combat system we've seen. But when you're in deep amongst a huge group of bad guys, every button-bash throws up hyper fast and ultra cool moves that make you feel like you're choreographing an ass-kicking carnival of carnage. Awesome!? Not 'arf!

TURTLE ANNIHILATION

On top of that, you can lob spikey shurikens into bad guy face. They come in three tasty flavours: regular,

electric and explosive, each with satisfying effects of their own. Or why not blow up a car or barrel to give your enemies that pebble-dashed with shrapnel effect?

TMNT plays so smoothly, and looks so good, that if your mate walked into the room he'd swear you were watching the TV show – until he grabs a second pad for co-op chaos. Cel shading is the perfect visual style for the action, catchphrases gush from the speakers, and since



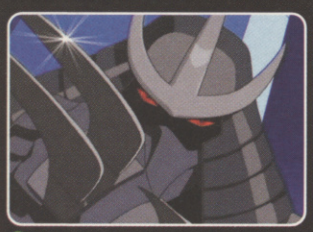
Exploding barrels are a useful weapon – just smack them towards the baddies

KICKIN' SHELL AND TAKIN' NAMES!

Each stage ends with an epic battle against an oversized bad guy. The first time you come up against these monsters you'll mess your shell, but chill out, focus on their attack patterns, and you'll find their weak spot!

Wee mousers are tough enough but look at this boss! Stick it up his batty!

Shredder cobbles together this fake turtle to sully the boys' good name



Shredder is the final boss. Reckon you can take him out on his own turf?

This mix-and-match robot nicks stuff for a gutless petty crook. He starts small...

...but in the junkyard he sucks up metal and becomes a hulking behemoth!

Comic book visuals and sugar-coated colours bleed off the screen. It's like Viewtiful Joe in 3D!

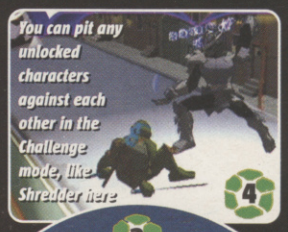
Spin moves are the best way to thin out a pack of attackers. Just like Neo in the Matrix!

So how does a Turtle get his health back? Pizza of course! Just like real life...

THE GANG'S ALL HERE

It's not just the Turtles who make an appearance in the game. If a character appears in the TV show, they'll be in here somewhere – it's like a who's who of TMNT!

One time news reporter turned antique shop owner April O'Neil provides the eye candy



You can pit any unlocked characters against each other in the Challenge mode, like Shredder here

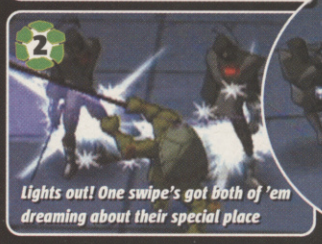
Casey Jones has a bone to pick with the Foot Clan – they killed his dad

If you play as Raphael you'll have to battle Casey to gain his trust

SHELL SHOCKED!

Each Turtle has a stun move they can use to incapacitate enemies. It's also useful for starting off some monster mid-air combos!

Wallop the gormless goons with your weapon and prepare for the sucker punch...

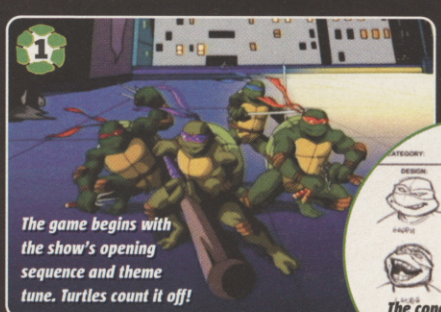


Lights out! One swipe's got both of 'em dreaming about their special place

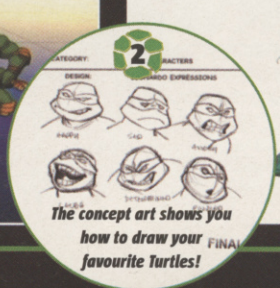
Ring the alarm! The blunt end of a Bo stick – what a shite way to wake up!

ART ATTACKS!

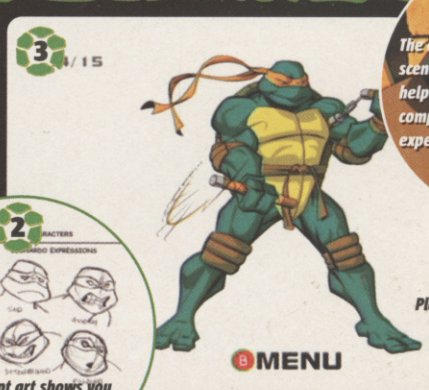
The game is presented just like an episode of the show. Real animations link the action together and there are reams of exclusive concept art to unlock!



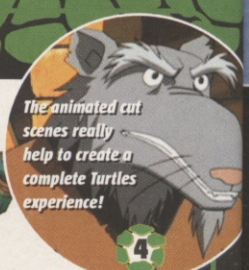
The game begins with the show's opening sequence and theme tune. Turtles count it off!



The concept art shows you how to draw your favourite Turtles!

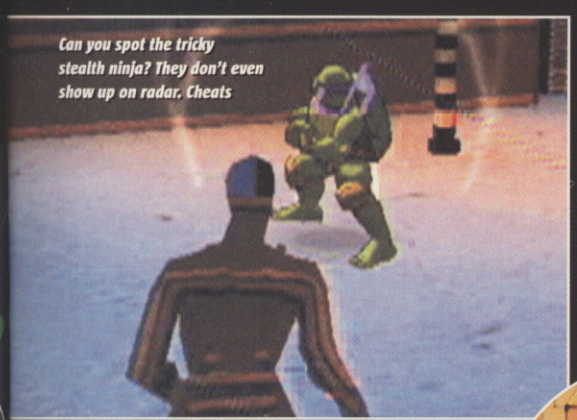


Playing through the game with each character unlocks their specific art

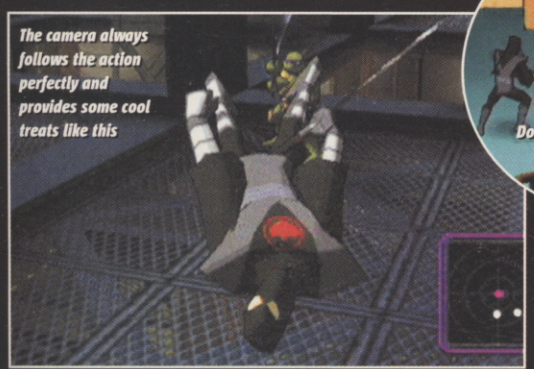


The animated cut scenes really help to create a complete Turtles experience!

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES IN TIME TO KICK SOME SHELL!



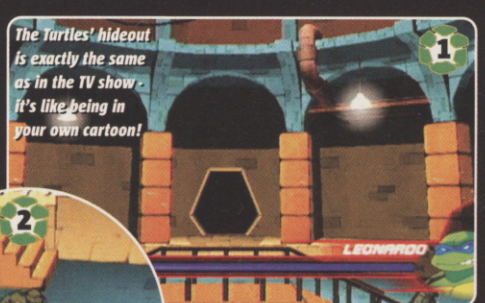
Can you spot the tricky stealth ninja? They don't even show up on radar. Cheats



The camera always follows the action perfectly and provides some cool treats like this

DO THE DOJO

The Turtles do have some nifty ninjitsu skills but they're still young. Splinter will drag you into the dojo at various points to show you a new move or teach you about the ways of the ninja...



The Turtles' hideout is exactly the same as in the TV show - it's like being in your own cartoon!

Donatello learns how to cope with multiple enemies

Mike's last challenge is a battle against Leonardo. Helps develop self-control, see?

Certain moves are only unlocked once you've passed these challenges

the levels are linked by specially commissioned sequences direct from the cartoon's animators, the feeling of immersion in the Turtle's world is never broken.

PIZZA THE ACTION

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles is a steaming 18-inch deep pan pizza, hot and fresh from the kitchen loaded with chunks of meaty ninja combat, and sweet comic-book visuals. If you're mega hungry, the extra toppings are a challenge mode where you can battle *against* your mate, exclusive concept art, and a load of excellent unlockable stuff that's *too* cool to mention.

Come on, you must be full up by now! Make sure you check back in at the CVG hideout soon and we'll sort you out with another hot slice of Turtle action.

CVG OPINION

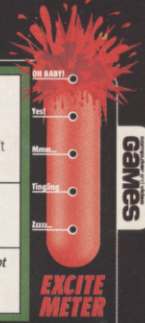
Lean, green and cooler than James Dean, TMNT is shaping up to be the most frantic beat 'em up on the streets. We can't wait till next year! **Graeme**

WE LOVE

- *Action packed button-bashing*
- *Vibrant cartoon graphics*
- *All you favourite characters*

WE HATE

- *Basic, old-school game concept*
- *Lack of variety*
- *Makes your thumb throb*



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■ OUT: DECEMBER 25

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IN A NUTSHELL

Hotly anticipated, super-realistic, sneaky covert-ops sequel to last year's first-person shooter. The team-orientated multiplayer mode encompasses a wide variety of objective-based missions.

AVAILABLE ON

PS2

WWW.ACTIVISION.COM

ONLINE GAMING
Can you play the game online, against other gamers around the globe? Find out here

PUBLISHER, DEVELOPER AND RELEASE DATE
Who makes the game and when it's due out, to the best of CVG's knowledge

PLAYERS
How many people can play. If it's anything from one to 32, we'll put 32!

IN A NUTSHELL
A brief summary of what the game is like. If it's an update and CVG has already previewed it we'll also sum up stuff we've said before

FORMAT
The console we played the game on is highlighted red, but other formats it's coming out on are listed too!

WEBSITE
Want more info, more screens and to see it in action? Visit this URL!

HOW CVG'S PREVIEWS WORK

INFO OVERLOAD!
What it's like to play, how it compares to other games and whether it's any good

THE BEST PICS
See exactly how good (or bad!) the game looks with CVG's sweet-as screenshots

CVG OPINION
What we thought of the game, no matter what stage of development the game is at

WE LOVE
The good things we like about the game so far

WE HATE
The things we'd really like the developers to avoid including in the final game

WHAT THE EXCITE METER™ MEANS

You can tell how excited CVG's experts are about the game being previewed simply by looking at the Excite Meter! Easy, huh?

CVG OPINION
It's looking promising as long as the developer remembers to pay special attention to those dodgy AI routines! Otherwise this is coming along nicely **Mike**

WE LOVE
- *Pretty explosions*
- *Brilliantly violent set pieces*
- *Strong soundtrack*

WE HATE
- *The heroes are quite scarce*
- *No online option... yet*
- *Lack of blood*

GAMES

Dropping the kids off at the pool, Castlevania style

The more hits you get in the more damage, like dur

■ PUBLISHER
KONAMI
■ DEVELOPER
KONAMI
■ OUT: FEB 2004

ONLINE GAMING

IN A NUTSHELL

Explore a colossal gothic castle armed with a deadly whip and devastating magic spells, fighting huge and vicious monsters, solving puzzles and avoiding deadly traps. Awesome!

AVAILABLE ON

PS2

WWW.KONAMI.COM/LAMENTOFINNOCENCE/

Castlevania

NAME CHANGE ALERT!

What's all this Lament Of Innocence stuff you might have read about? Well, it's Castlevania's US name, hence the game's URL. In Europe it'll be plain old Castlevania. Huh.

Oi sicko, we know what you want. You crave the crack of whip across the skinned flanks of a hellhound. You hunger after the splash of putrid demon bile on your galoshes as you slice tentacled abominations into oozy pieces. You need the thunderous, planet-splitting explosions that only your enchanted runes and spellbook can summon forth.

Until now you could have all that (and more) but only on a titchy GBA screen. Come February though, you can get all of your Castlevania fantasies in full 3D, with beautiful visuals, enemies so big they don't even

POWER HUNGRY

All of the classic Castlevania special weapons like holy water and throwing knives return, only this time you can enhance them by combining gems and crystals you find throughout the adventure. Even the earliest upgrades transform these special items into doomsday device-like objects of power...

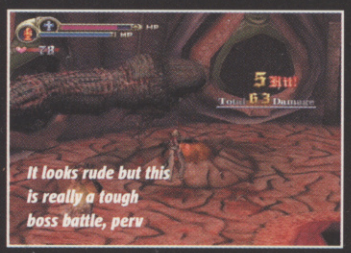
Leon's regular crucifix attack isn't very strong on its own

But combine your gems and any attack becomes devastatingly effective

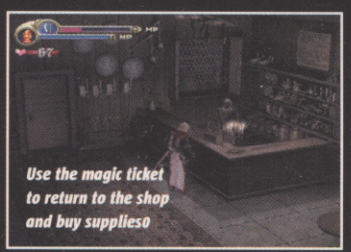
Defend against special attacks to increase your special gauge...

...and you are able to unleash yet more special attacks like these fiery feet

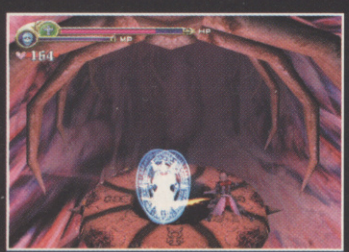
Smasharoo! Destroy the demons with your magic spells



It looks rude but this is really a tough boss battle, perv

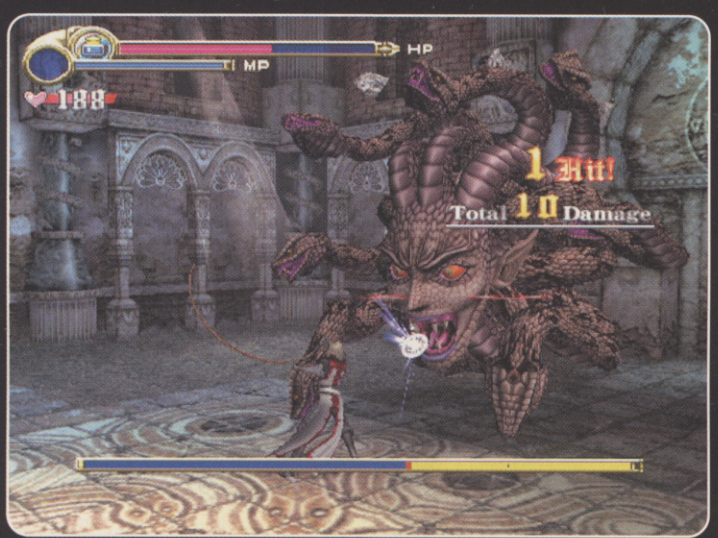


Use the magic ticket to return to the shop and buy supplies0



There's more than architecture to explore...

Pink flashing on screen means attack!



Fancy turning into a statue? Didn't think so, so keep on the move

fit on the screen and the kind of classic puzzle-solving and exploring that has made the game series one of the world's favourites. Are you drooling yet? You should be...

IT BETTER BE BETTER

After two frankly shite N64 updates of Castlevania (not forgetting the canned Dreamcast version – oops!) you can understand our nerves when we were presented with the latest attempt at bringing the game whipping and screaming into three dimensions.

So how do we feel now? Well, the word is, 'Pher-yew'. Because once you get beyond the curiously flat and undramatic opening cutscenes, it's clear that this new Castlevania is a giant ogre step ahead of any previous 3D offering. What's more, for the first time, the series' long-standing genius producer, Koji Igarashi, is responsible for developing the game. Attention to all the delicious details of what has made the 2D Castlevania games so powerful and entertaining must surely be at the top of his unholy list.

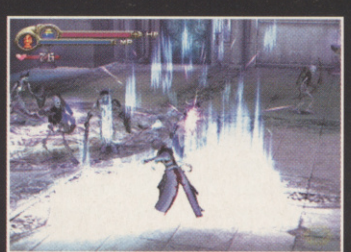
LIKE BUFFY, BUT WITH BLOKES

Also for the first time, you get to find out exactly how the whip-cracking, vamp-lamping Castlevania saga began. Set in the 11th century, the game zaps you way back into the past to fill the blood-caked boots of Leon Belmont, the first in the Belmont clan's long line of vampire slayers. The story promises to be richer than a bean-spilling royal butler and for fans it's a genuine event in the Castlevania chronology.

It's also shaping up to be an absolutely blinding adventure in its

Use the inventory wheel to quickly select items and spells

Destructible scenery is can be just as fatal as a demon army

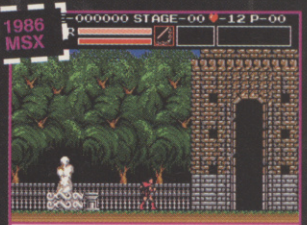


Even tidal waves of holy water aren't always enough to protect you from the hellish skellies

THE CASTLEVANIA CHRONOLOGY

For almost 20 years, the Castlevania games have rocked the games world. More than 15 different ones have appeared across the formats. In fact, the saga practically spans the entire history of console videogaming, making it one of the most significant series out there. Check out the highs and lows of a legendary franchise right here.

1986 MSX

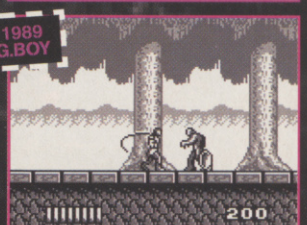


VAMPIRE KILLER
Though not officially a Castlevania title, Vampire Killer shared much of its content with the first Castlevania game, only with reworked levels and a far simpler structure. This sowed the seeds for the legend to follow...

1986 SNES

CASTLEVANIA
Crisp visuals (for the time), pace and challenge made this NES adventure a hit. A bit limited by today's standards (you can't manoeuvre in the middle of a jump, say) but a classic nonetheless.

1989 G.BOY



THE CASTLEVANIA ADVENTURE
The first handheld Castlevania wasn't up to the standards of the NES. Nevertheless it sold bucketloads and paved the way for many (much better) handheld sequels.

1991 SNES

SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV
More of a remake of the first NES game, this took full advantage of its then next-gen hardware, with sprite scaling and 3D effects. It wasn't as advanced gameplay-wise as Castlevania III though.

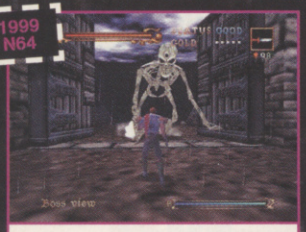
CONT

1997 PSONE

CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

Regarded by many as not just the best Castlevania game, but the best action game EVER. Packed with secrets and weapons it's still amazing to play – if you can find a copy anywhere, that is.

1999 N64



CASTLEVANIA

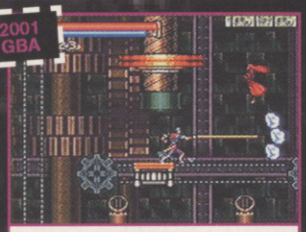
The first attempt to take Castlevania into 3D resulted in an atmospheric game but also a flawed one. Difficult too, as most of your deaths are a result of the poor controls and terrible collision detection. Nasty.

N/A DC

CASTLEVANIA RESURRECTION,

All hope for a decent 3D Castlevania vanished with the news that the DC version had been canned. No reasons were given, but it doesn't take a genius to work out that it couldn't have been very good.

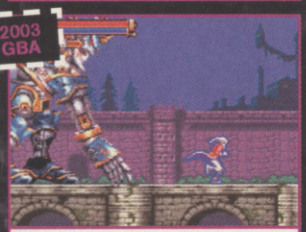
2001 GBA



CASTLEVANIA

A return to form and by far the most enjoyable early GBA release. Similar to Symphony Of The Night, it introduced randomly generated upgrade cards. Unfortunately murky visuals made it difficult to see.

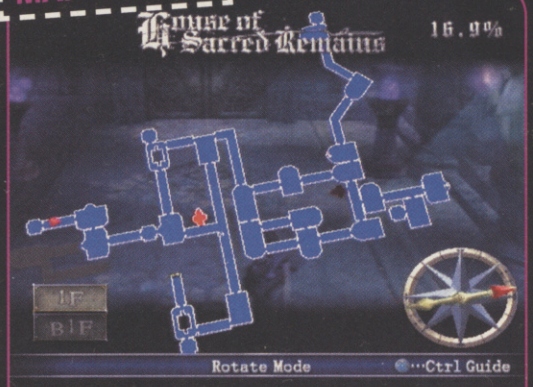
2003 GBA



CASTLEVANIA: HARMONY OF DISSONANCE, AND ARIA OF SORROW

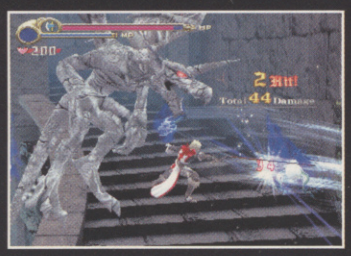
The most recent GBA games are both awesome. Harmony is fast and easy to finish. Aria Of Sorrow more challenging, but play them both.

MAP ATTACK!



Fans of the recent GBA games will rejoice to see that this is just one intricate part of one floor of an enormous castle just waiting to be torn apart, room by room, by you.

This stone golem has clearly eaten too many boulder-topped pizzas



You're whipping the wrong way, Leon!

Puzzles AND hellhounds - classic Castlevania

own right, so that even if you'd rather stick one of Leon's holy daggers up your ass than get interested in some nonsense tale of things that go chomp in the night, you're still guaranteed one of the most adrenaline-soaked action experiences you've ever had.

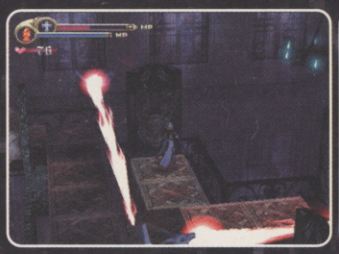
PETRIFYING PERFECTION?

What's so promising about the game is that while in 3D, the level structure, world map and the puzzles are one hundred per cent true to the spirit of the 2D games. You explore a seemingly endless castle, split into five main areas ranging from the gothic architecture of a grand cathedral, heavy with doom and desolation, to the swirling mists and tangled flora of the castle's forbidden gardens. Many doors are sealed or out of reach entirely, meaning you'll have to backtrack once you've augmented your hero's skills.

Upgrades range from fiery feet of death to aid you in your epic battles, to cool double jumps and wall-scaling abilities. What's good is that the game simply keeps opening up with every new ability learned, and you feel compelled to return to previously cleared areas to see what you can find with your new skills. When you do, enemies who once caused you so much trouble fall beneath your awesome arsenal of enchanted weaponry, making you feel like the gaming bad-ass you know you are. Yes... it really is that good. We've played Castlevania for hours and have barely even scratched the surface of what the game is sure to deliver. The visuals are striking, the soundtrack outstanding and the action so finely tuned it could play Mozart in its sleep. Forget Christmas presents, this season's best gift will come a bit later, but is sure to be well worth the wait. CVG

PRINCELY TRAPPINGS

The Prince Of Darkness has more than just monsters to get between you and him. There are traps waiting around every corner. Each has a pattern to avoid or a solution to disarming it. Play around, have fun, just don't get impaled, squashed or burned to a frazzle in the process.

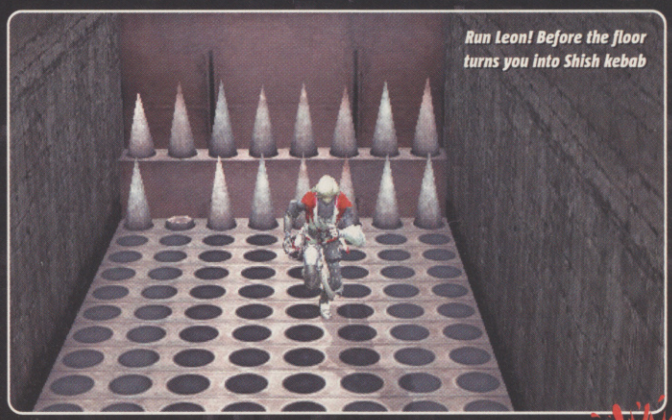


You can avoid these lasers easily but later barriers react to your position

Make a break for the gaps in the falling ceiling to avoid a premature death

Use your whip to launch from pillar to pillar and vault the electric fence

The swinging axes of past Castlevania games return in their full PS2 glory



Run Leon! Before the floor turns you into Shish kebab

CVG OPINION

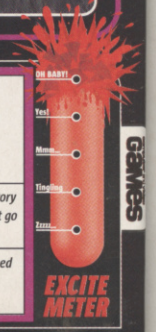
Imagine all the the best bits of all the Castlevania, except better. This one is sure to go down in history as the best Castlevania game ever. **Lee**

WE LOVE

- Totally true to the saga's history
- Grabs hold of you, doesn't let go
- Beautiful graphics

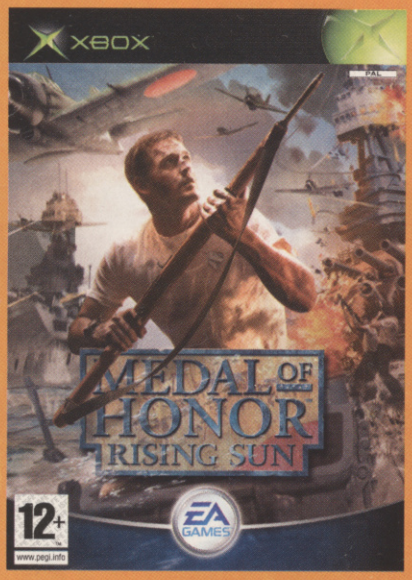
WE HATE

- Due out Boxing Day but slipped
- Erm... it'll make the other Castlevanias look poo



games

Tis the season to be gaming.



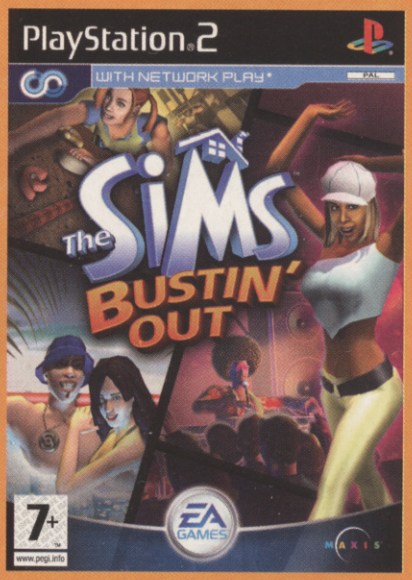
MEDAL OF HONOR™ — RISING SUN

Release Date: 28 November 2003

Pack your gear, head to the Pacific, and fight Japanese imperialism in Medal of Honor™ Rising Sun. In the latest instalment of this top-selling series, Marine Corporal Joseph Griffin must endure some of the fiercest battles fought during WWII, through 10 levels of gameplay spread across 5 major missions.

THE COMET PRICE £39.95

Also available on:



THE SIMS™ — BUSTIN' OUT

Release Date: 12 December 2003

The Sims™ are making a big return to the console and this time they are bustin' out of the house and exploring all-new locations around town. Plus The Sims™ Bustin' Out also features new integrated two-player gameplay and memory card support, for those who like to take their Sims over to a friend's house and show them off.

THE COMET PRICE £39.95

Also available on: GAME BOY ADVANCE SP, XBOX

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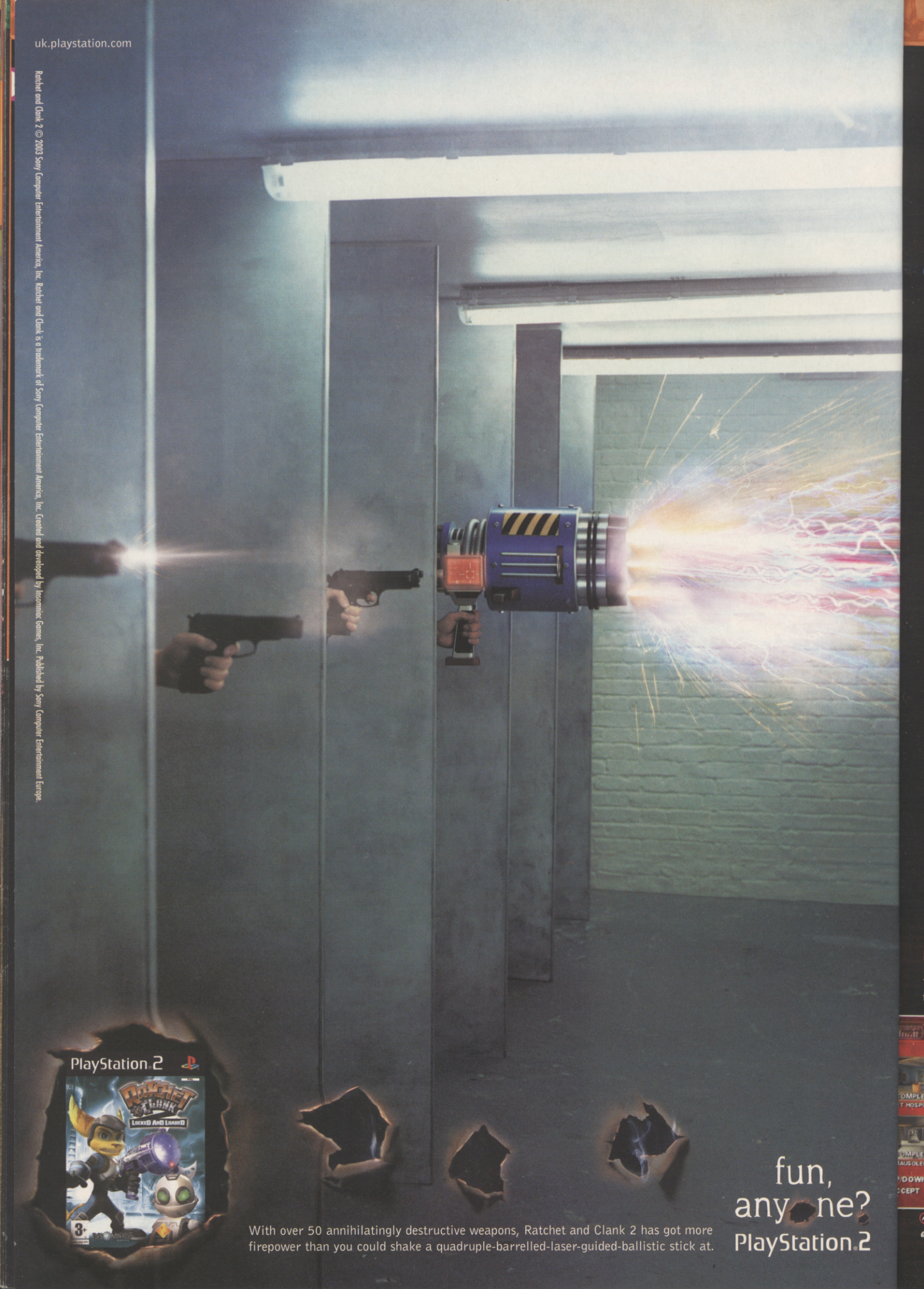
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PlayStation 2
Ratchet & Clank
Locked And Loaded
3+
With over 50 annihilatingly destructive weapons, Ratchet and Clank 2 has got more firepower than you could shake a quadruple-barrelled-laser-guided-ballistic stick at.
fun, anyone?
PlayStation 2

TERMINATOR 3
RISE OF THE MACHINES™

PUBLISHER
ATARI
DEVELOPER
BLACK OPS
OUT: EARLY DEC (TBC)

ONLINE GAMING | X1

IN A NUTSHELL

The second Terminator licensed game in a year, this mix of genres is the delayed official T3 movie tie-in. It's no gaming revolution but you do finally get to play as Arnie himself.

AVAILABLE ON
PS2
ALSO ON
XBOX

WWW.T3GAME.COM

THE COOLEST CUT

Like all big movie stars whose faces appear in games, Arnie got to sign off his likeness.

One look at the 40 minutes of wick rendered cutscenes and you know why the Governator approved of how developer Black Ops made him look. But the in-game model looks about as much like the CG version as a Dalek. Lucky then that what he really looks like doesn't matter much when the T-X starts tearing chunks off his face.

This is the first time Arnie's face and voice have ever appeared in a videogame, so Rise Of The Machines should be a big deal. Only it's six months too late. We've seen better co-ordination in a rotting corpse.

Bypass this big metal foot-in-mouth fact and you'll find Rise Of The Machine is mostly a by-the-numbers run-and-gun shooter, playing out sections of the movie and filling in the story gaps with missions from different time zones. You know the score: fixed gun positions, exploding scenery, secret areas, contemporary and sci-fi weapons, basic 'press switch' or 'blow it up' objectives.

For about a fifth of the time play switches to third person for grappler-style one-on-one with the luscious T-X. These arena sections are based on the explosive Terminator-on-Terminator fights of the movie, and while restrictive and repetitive, you do get to bend cages round each other's heads, smack up lots of concrete and Feng Shui rooms with your fists, Arnie-style.

EX-TERMINATE!

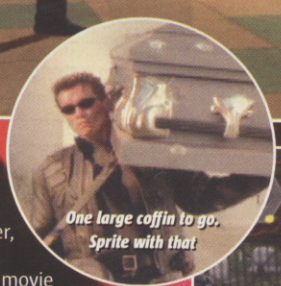
Everything remains true to the Terminator universe, of course, and if that's not enough of a draw for obsessive fans of the licence, there's also some cool new material to chew over, including several minutes of exclusive movie footage and answers to questions like why it's always the same Terminator that gets sent back and how come he speaks with an Austrian accent.

All in all, not bad, then. But we can't help but wonder if Black Ops' decision to make Rise Of The Machines mostly a first-person shooter actually undersells one of its greatest assets – the Governator himself.

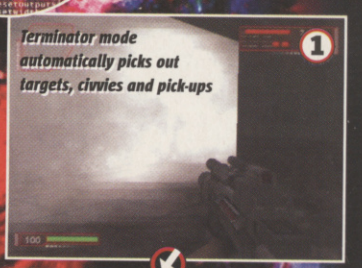
Sure, you get to hear loads of his classic quips authentically delivered in the big man's trademark Austrian accent, and his face is all over the game's cutscenes. But most of the time all you see of him actually in the game is his hands gripping a big weapon, something you'd usually associate with a certain type of under-the-counter video 'actor', not a megastar like Arnie. CVG

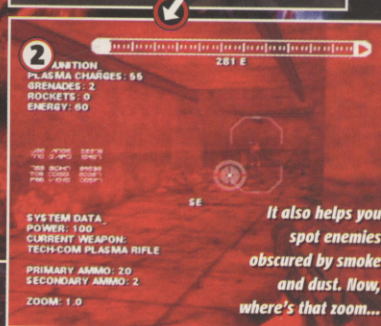
Complete levels to unlock extras like quad damage and old Atari game Missile Command

Crate move!

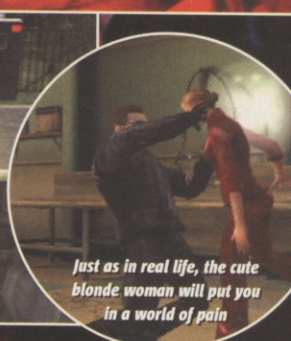


One large coffin to go. Sprite with that

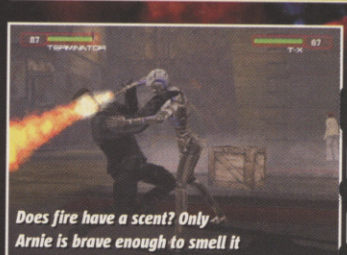




Bok! You've always wanted to ex a cop car, right? Now you can



Just as in real life, the cute blonde woman will put you in a world of pain



Does fire have a scent? Only Arnie is brave enough to smell it

CVG OPINION

Simplistic gaming aimed at anyone who goes nuts for all things Arnie. Won't revive the series' rep among heavyweight gamers though. Pete

WE LOVE
- Exclusive movie footage
- Playing as the real Terminator
- Smashing up environments

WE HATE
- It's half a year too late
- In-game graphics disappointing
- Target lock in an FPS

COUNTER STRIKE™

■ PUBLISHER
MICROSOFT
■ DEVELOPER
VALVE SOFTWARE
■ OUT: NOVEMBER 18

ONLINE GAMING x16

IN A NUTSHELL

The eternal conflict between terrorists and counter-terrorists leaps from PC to Xbox, with enhanced textures, new maps and even a single-player game to complement the classic online play.

AVAILABLE ON XBOX

WWW.MICROSOFT.COM/UK

Incredible games often have humble origins. The Half-Life conversion Counter-Strike is the biggest grass roots multiplayer sensation to crawl out of the mod community, and now it's the first such game to hit consoles.

But this isn't just a port. Fifteen multiplayer maps play home to up to 16 players via LAN or the Internet. Seven of those maps are exclusive, and all feature graphics that trump the original. Blame that on the 24- and 32-bit textures that replace the dusty 8-bit tiles found on the PC. The visuals may not be ground-breaking, but they're a big step up from the PC engine, rooted in the tech of 1998.

ANGELIC CONTROL

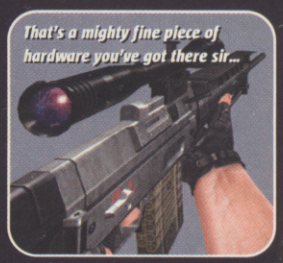
Die-hard fans of the original may yet scoff at the promising translation; how can the smooth PC control scheme be replicated? One word: Halo. Since that game couldn't be arsed to include Internet multiplayer, it's fitting that CS has borrowed its control scheme, insuring instant accessibility. Loss of the mouse is the biggest change to gameplay, which still revolves around hostage rescue and demolition modes.

Counter-Strike also features a single-player component, modelled after Valve's PC-based Condition Zero. The 20 missions may not be the most compelling stuff on the market, but the bots populating each level (which can also fill out multiplayer matches) are enough to train fledgling commandos. On Easy, the AI is child's play, but crank it to Professional and be ready to have your pride handed back to you. Why, it's enough to squash chronic SOCOM envy.

GUN SHOPPE

Counter-Strike rewards performance (survival, kills, etc) with cold hard cash, which buys weapons to further stomp the opposition.

Purchases are made via a circular quick select menu at the head of each level, using the thumbsticks to quickly select the gear that will keep you alive for six more minutes.



That's a mighty fine piece of hardware you've got there sir...

Hellish conditions sir. You go first

Go on, keep the hostages - we'll have the cash. Does that sound fair?

Hollywood-style tip - killing's easier in shades

That urban camo isn't fooling anyone y'know

Using public toilets has become so dangerous

CVG OPINION

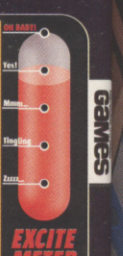
The single-player game may be a little thin, but the online game is a mirror of the PC original, with better graphics and lag-free tactical action. **Russ**

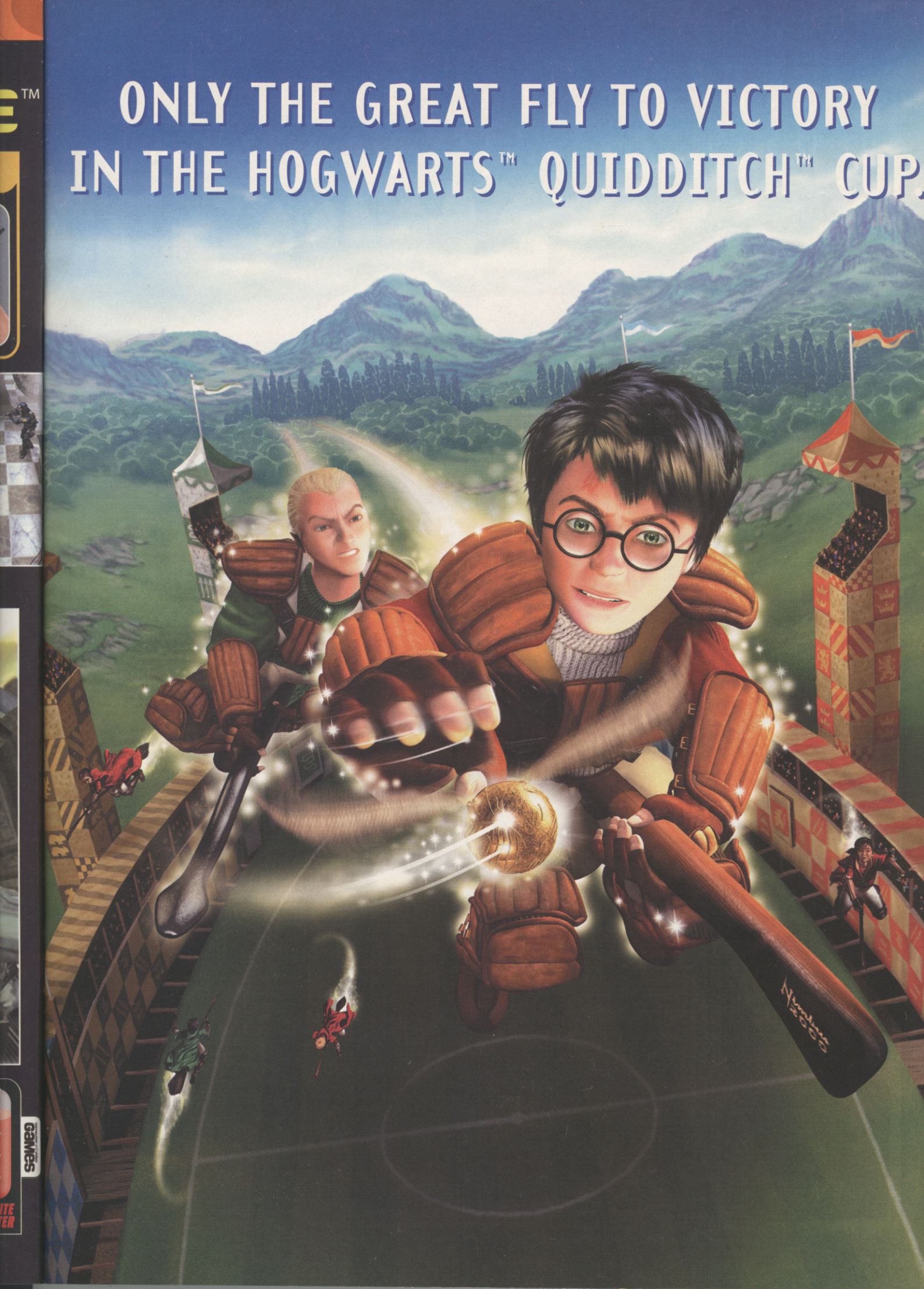
WE LOVE

- *Exclusive map*
- *Solid road-tested online action*
- *Shiny high-res textures*

WE HATE

- *You can't play with PC gamers*
- *Xbox Live still broadband only*
- *Weak single-player*

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IN THE HOGWARTS™ QUIDDITCH™ CUP

RICHARD BURNS RALLY

■ PUBLISHER
SCI
■ DEVELOPER
WARTHOG SWEDEN
■ OUT APRIL 2004

ONLINE GAMING | x8

IN A NUTSHELL

Learn the tricks of the trade from World Rally Champion Richard Burns, then chew up the gravel in eight licensed cars over six official rallies.

AVAILABLE ON
PS2

ALSO ON
XBOX, PC

WWW.SCI.CO.UK

Amped-up wheel physics give a realistic ride

Drop one wheel off the road surface for a split second and you'll feel it in the handling

Already the car models are looking wicked. Check out the glare from those headlights

The realism means you'll be punished more for any bumps, so save your throttle for the straights

Richard who? Unless you're a rabid fan of the World Rally Championship the only driver you'll know by name is Colin McRae.

We'll let you in on a wee secret – even though the Scottish petrolhead's games have gone from strength to strength, his driving career is on a slope more slippery than an icy hairpin.

Enter Richard Burns, Britain's most successful rally driver, 2001 WRC champion and new contender for the rally game driving seat.

Frankly, though: rally game, schmally game. There are too many of them already, so this really needs something special to set it apart. From our early impressions it looks like that's going to be cool, stony realism.

BEARING REAL BALLS

The blokes who make this are building car models as technnically accurate and realistic in terms of physics as we've ever seen. The idea is to create a handling system that feels exactly like a real car, with every single thing that could go wrong included. Whereas in most driving games you just have to worry about damaging the suspension – in Richard Burns you'll have to worry about damaging the ball bearing in the struts of the shock absorbers of the suspension. Phew!

BUCKLE UP

It might sound intimidating but the accuracy of the handling should offer an unparalleled rally experience. Already the visuals are looking impressive, with the wide open vistas of Sony's WRC 3 and the close foliage detail of Colin McRae 04. There's also more attention to environmental details like potholes and ditches that could destroy your challenge with the crunch of a buckled wheel.

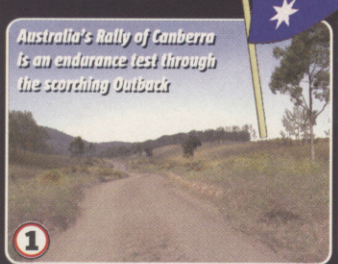
With the man himself providing technical input, Richard Burns Rally should be able to push its nose into the stream of rally game traffic. We're looking forward to giving a more complete version a shakedown. CVG

You'll begin at the Forest Rally School in North Wales with Richard as your teacher

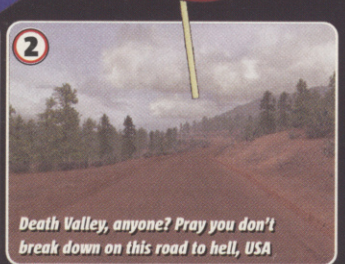
Trackside detail looks mint and creates a blistering sensation of speed as it thunders past

RALLYIN' ALL OVER THE WORLD

Richard Burns features six licensed rallies. With developing weather conditions and realistic road conditions promised, these could be the most realistic stages ever!

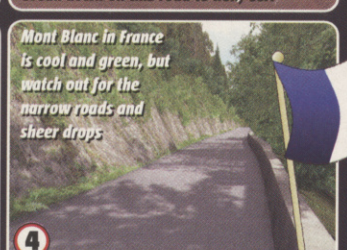


1 Australia's Rally of Canberra is an endurance test through the scorching Outback



2 Death Valley, anyone? Pray you don't break down on this road to hell, USA

3 The snowy wastes of Finland provide the slippery backdrop for the Arctic Rally. Bring your tyre chains!



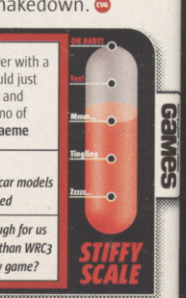
4 Mont Blanc in France is cool and green, but watch out for the narrow roads and sheer drops

CVG OPINION

Good looking, hard-driver with a diamond-hard core. Could just revolutionise the genre and become the Gran Turismo of rally games. Maybe. **Graeme**

WE LOVE
- Lovely environments
- Complex and realistic car models
- Great sensation of speed

WE HATE
- McRae's complex enough for us
- Fewer cars and rallies than WRC3
- Room for another rally game?



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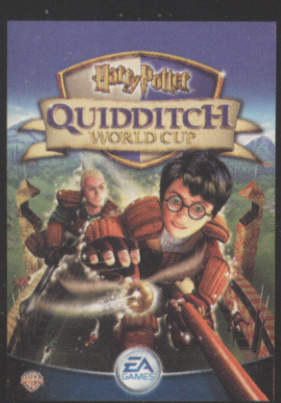

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Wario ware, inc.™

MEGA MICROGAME$!

We've all felt 'the turtle's head' in times of panic. Here, Wario gets to feel it for real

■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO
■ DEVELOPER NINTENDO
■ OUT 2004 (UK)

ONLINE GAMING x4

IN A NUTSHELL

Wario Ware, Inc. comes to the GameCube with a terrific new multiplayer twist. This is what you've been waiting for: a four-player reinvention of the craziest GBA game in the world!

AVAILABLE ON NINTENDO GAMECUBE.

WWW.NINTENDO.CO.JP/NGC/GZWJ

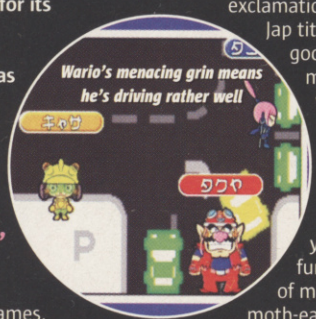
Wario's psycho stare, along with his starring role in the classic Game Boy Warioland series and his craftiness in Mario Kart, Golf and Tennis, have made him Nintendo's answer to Ozzy Osbourne. Even so, this Summer's GBA hit Wario Ware was something of a shock – so unprepared were we for its strangeness. And, of course, its utter brilliance. Surely it was only a matter of time before the mini-game-a-thon made it on to GameCube...

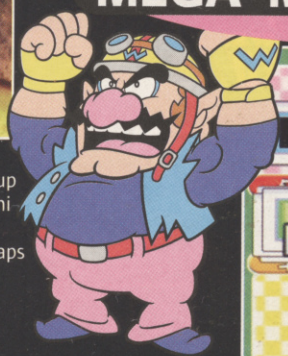
"ALL ROUND MINE"

Wario Ware invites players to compete in more than 200 mini-games, most of which are identical to those found in the GBA version.

Now, if you're thinking, "Yeah, but I've already got the Game Boy Advance version and I've thrashed it to death. So why oh why CVG, do I need to buy it again?" well, just calm down and we'll tell you.

Because in Japan Wario Ware's called Atsumare!!, which translates as 'gather round'. And so you should: in all, there are 20 multiplayer modes, making this a frantic party game to rank up there with Bishi Bashi Special (which is perhaps Wario Ware's closest game relative). See those double exclamation marks in the game's Jap title? They're there for a good reason... By adding multiplayer to what was already one of its best games, Nintendo has created what looks set to be an essential title, especially if you like your gaming fast and furious and with a load of mates crowded onto a moth-eaten sofa. The downside is that there isn't much in the way of new mini-games. If you've seen all the GBA version has to offer, then you'll have seen a lot of what Wario Ware cooks up. In fact, the single-player game here is virtually the same as the one we gave a nine to a few months back. Even the visuals are pretty much unchanged! Still, the multiplayer features in this follow-up are what will make it worth your money. Made in Wario really should turn out certifiably insane.





This multiplayer mode is a card game using a virtual e-reader

LIKE PLATES OF SUSHI ON A CONVEYOR BELT

All you need to know about Wario Ware's multiplayer modes is that all 20 variations revolve around the key theme of adrenaline-fuelled competition. Take no prisoners...

In Ikinokori Rival mode, four of you dance on-screen, then spotlights fall randomly on one/some/all of you, dictating who plays in the next mini-game. And in Fusen Pan mode, you take mini-games one at a time, while those not involved tap A to blow into a red balloon. When the balloon finally pops, the player who is mini-gaming is eliminated as the loser!

Read CVG while sitting patiently in the doctor's waiting room before some mini-games

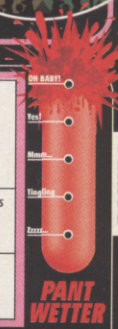
The nurse calls the next patient to the operating table (games room)

CVG OPINION

Not only are the mini-games works of genius, but there's multiplayer to consider. It's bound to be a triumph of gameplay over graphics. **Jonti**

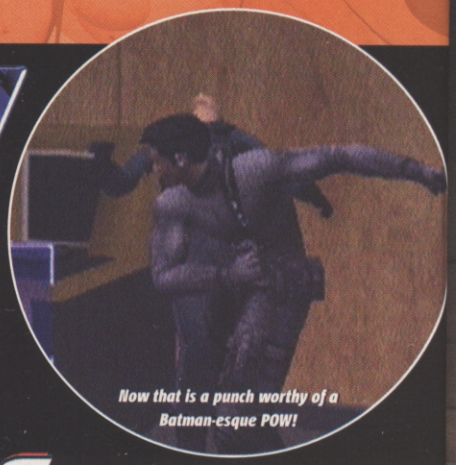
WE LOVE
- More than 200 Nintendo games
- Tremendous fun in multiplayer
- Hip 'n' trendy and all that

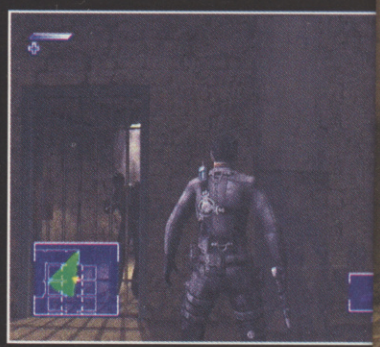
WE HATE
- Most of the mini-games are repeats of the GBA ones
- Graphics hardly cutting edge



games

MI:I
MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE®
Operation Surma

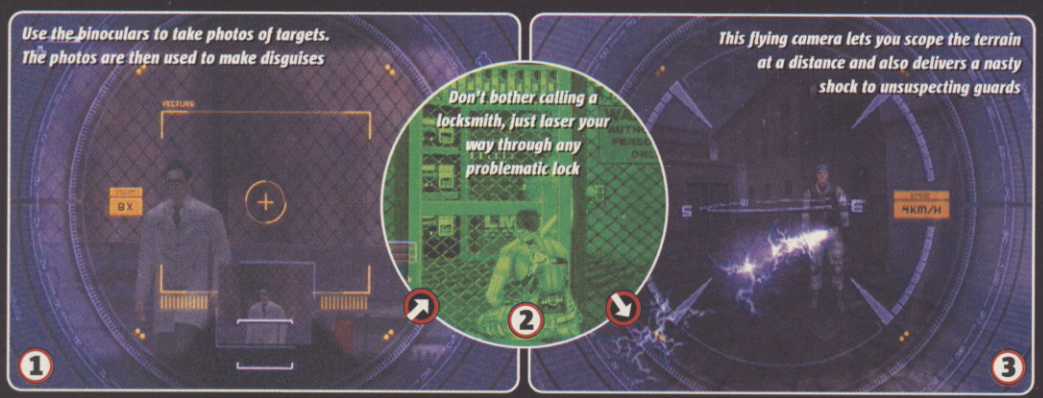

Now that is a punch worthy of a Batman-esque POW!


If you let him out he'll be mighty grateful

Saddam? Is that you? Cap him anyway

INSPECT THESE GADGETS!

Don't worry, you won't be going in armed with nothing but harsh language. As a member of the IMF team, you'll be tooled up with the best tech this side of James Bond. Here's what you got...



■ PUBLISHER
ATARI
■ DEVELOPER
MELBOURNE HOUSE
■ OUT: DECEMBER 5

IN A NUTSHELL

After a seven-year hiatus Ethan Hunt is back, donning disguises and creeping around in the dark. Will it be mission accomplished or self-destruction?

AVAILABLE ON
PS2

ALSO ON
XBOX

WWW.UK.ATARI.COM/

Impossible? Well, no, but it is a bit difficult to work out why a Mission: Impossible game should just randomly appear three years after the last film, with no new movie expected until 2005. Why, it's almost like they're trying to sneak it out while nobody's looking...

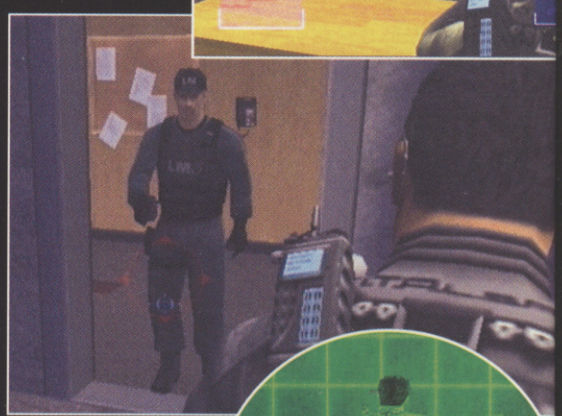
SO IT'S BOBBINS, THEN, YES?

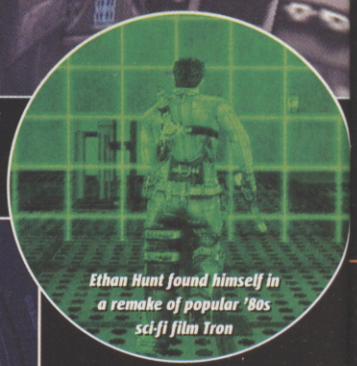
Not necessarily. Instead of following the plot of either film, Mission: Impossible the game uses them as jump-off points for espionage action. The gameplay is pretty straightforward stuff and will be easy to pick up for anyone familiar with Splinter Cell.

Whether it's too straightforward we won't be able to tell until the final version arrives, but certainly the action feels a bit spoon-fed at this stage. Often you receive explicit instructions as to when to use the binoculars or other gadgets without having to think about it at all. It's also easy to figure out how to solve certain problems by looking in your inventory – Mission: Impossible works on the premise that if you don't have it, you ain't gonna need it.

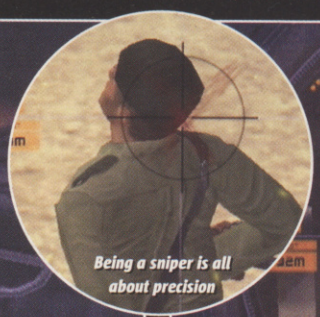
On the plus side, one of the best bits taken from the film is Ethan's rubber masks. On several occasions you have to photograph an enemy in order to make a mask of his face and disguise yourself as him.

Another great feature of the game is the part enemies can play. You can grab bad guys in a chokehold then force them to turn off alarms and do all sorts of helpful things. And then you can snap their necks! CVG


Aim for this geezer's legs because the body armour will be too thick for your tranquilliser gun


Ethan Hunt found himself in a remake of popular '80s sci-fi film Tron

Take him down before you're discovered


Being a sniper is all about precision

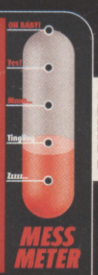
Save ammo, shoot the fuel barrels and let the suckers burn

CVG OPINION

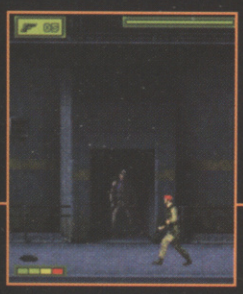
Overall, Mission: Impossible looks solid enough, but what's that? Something pongs a bit funny. Poo, it's the smell of a really old film licence. **Paul A**

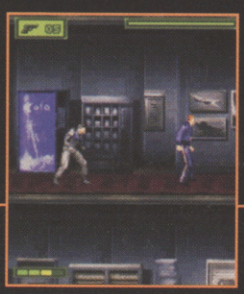
WE LOVE
- Being able to force bad guys to do our bidding
- Cool weapons and gadgets

WE HATE
- Suspect camera angles
- The gameplay is pretty linear and not too taxing



Tom Clancy's SPLINTER CELL
TEAM STEALTH ACTION





Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell® Team Stealth Action coming soon to the N-Gage™ game deck. Play as Sam Fisher and sneak behind enemy lines or team up via Bluetooth and play co-op to surprise your enemy in one of two unique, multiplayer modes exclusive to N-Gage. **n-gage.com**

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Bring Vegas to your phone with great features: hi-low, hold, nudge and collect.

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Can you handle the role of football manager? Take on a division of 16 teams to make your team the champions.

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Don't be a blockhead! Use your brain and skills to master the colourful blocks in this challenging puzzle game.

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You need to collect the diamonds and defeat enemies through 16 levels.

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Grab your board and fly down a wide range of courses, hit the jumps and pull off trick combos.

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Play in the fast lane. All the fun of real bowling without the silly shoes. Choose from players with varying abilities.

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Take part in a story of bravery, spirit and magic as you try and enter the Castle of Spells.

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Navigate through caves collecting rings and avoiding obstacles in this exciting 'snake-like' game.

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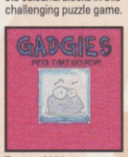
Chase the enemy car before the end of the road in a wide variety of levels. Take care of your petrol!



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Feed, clean and play with your own pet gadgie. Control its emotions enough to survive for 10 days.

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Start in the drivers championship and earn enough cash to customise your car.

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Play a variety of courses with different terrains, wind strength, clubs and putters.

Text to 8181: CVG GAME GRAVITY ✽
Use thrusters to land your ship softly on the moons of the solar system.

Text to 8181: CVG GAME MOON
Safely collect and drop off fares in your taxi pod. On the moon, gravity makes this a real test of skill!

Text to 8181: CVG GAME POPSTAR
Find fame and fortune as a popstar. Take care of your star if you want a number 1 hit!

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A Tetris like puzzle game where you must pit your wits to connect quarks of the same colour.

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Avoid other vehicles while picking up and dropping off hitchhikers. Keep an eye on the fuel and damage.

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The most popular mobile solitaire game around.

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Take control of the last tank left on the base and take on the aliens threatening your people with extinction.

Text to 8181: CVG GAME SPY
Be Penny Peril, the UK's sexiest secret agent, and take out the bad guys in enemy offices and secret locations.

Text to 8181: CVG GAME TITAN
Defend the trading space post. All routes must be cleared of pirates, outlaw mercenaries & asteroids.

Text to 8181: CVG GAME JETSKI
Pit your skills against other jetskiers. Power slide around corners, ride over buoys and avoid the rocks.

Text to 8181: CVG GAME ZONE ✽
A must for Tetris lovers. Keep your cool as you try to fit the falling pieces together to create blocks.

Picture Messages

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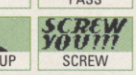

Colour Logos

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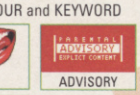

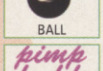

Images

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HOTTEST NEW RELEASES	KEYWORD
Angel City - **Love Me Right**	meright
Basement Jaxx - **Lucky Star**	lucky
Beyonce ft Sean Paul - **Baby Boy**	baby
Busta Rhymes - **Light Your Ass On Fire**	ass
Chingy - **Right Thurr**	thurr
Dido - **White Flag**	flag
Jamelia - **Superstar**	superstar
Kings Of Leon - **Wasted Time**	wasted
Korn - **Right Along**	rightalong
Kylie - **Slow**	slow
Limp Bizkit - **Behind Blue Eyes**	blueeyes
Linkin Park - **From The Inside**	fromthe
Lisa Maffia - **Women Of The World**	womenof
Mark Ronson ft Ghostdog - **Ooh Wee**	wee
Missy Elliot - **Pass That Dutch**	dutch
Pink - **Trouble**	trouble
R Kelly - **Thoia Thong**	thoia
Room 5 - **Music & You**	andyou
The Darkness - **I Believe In A Thing Called Love**	athing
The Strokes - **12:51**	strokes

8181 GREATEST TONES	KEYWORD
50 Cent - **21 Questions**	questions
50 Cent - **In Da Club**	club
Benny Bennassi - **Satisfaction**	satisfaction
Beyonce - **Crazy In Love**	inlove
Blu Cantrell ft Sean Paul - **Breathe**	breathe
Busta Rhyme ft Mariah Carey - **I Know What...**	youwant
Electric Six - **Gay Bar**	gaybar
Eminem - **Business**	business
Eminem - **Lose Yourself**	lose
Evanescence - **Bring Me To Life**	bring
Good Charlotte - **The Anthem**	anthem
Junior Senior - **Move Your Feet**	feet
Justin Timberlake - **Senorita**	senorita
R Kelly - **Snake**	snake
R Kelly - **Ignition**	ignition
Red Hot Chilli Peppers - **Universally Speaking**	speaking
Sean Paul - **Like Glue**	likeglue
The Stereophonics - **Maybe Tomorrow**	maybe
Ultrabeat - **Pretty Green Eyes**	greeneyes
XTM ft DJ Chucky - **Fly On The Wings Of Love**	flyon

8181 FILM & TV THEMES	KEYWORD
A Team - **TV Theme**	ateam
Airwolf - **TV Theme**	airwolf
Buffy - **TV Theme**	buffy
Futurama - **TV Theme**	futurama
Itchy & Scratchy - **TV Theme**	itchy
Jackass - **TV Theme**	jackass
Knight Rider - **TV Theme**	knight
Lord Of The Rings - **Film Theme**	rings
Mission Impossible - **Film Theme**	mission
Match Of The Day - **TV Theme**	match
Muppets - **TV Theme**	muppets
Only Fools & Horses - **TV Theme**	horses
Pink Panther - **TV Theme**	panther
Scooby Doo - **TV Theme**	scooby
Sopranos - **TV Theme**	sopranos
South Park -**TV Theme**	southpark
The Flintstones - **TV Theme**	flintstones
The Godfather - **Film Theme**	godfather
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- DEVELOPER: ILLUSION SOFTWORKS
- OUT: NOVEMBER 21

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Escaping from rival mobsters is harder when you're in a jalopy

MAFIA

The City of Lost Heaven

Hey, chief... yeah, you. I've been looking out for ya. You don't look like much to me, but turns out the boss wants to have a chat.

Word on the streets is you liked GTA. You found the mixture of driving, shooting and fighting to your taste. Well, bud, the boss might have a job for a stand-up cat like you.

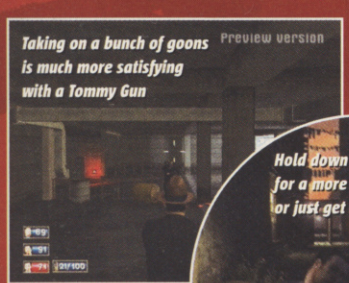
Thing is, the boss is a busy man. You can't just mosey on in there shooting your mouth off like some kinda schmuck. Listen up, I'm gonna fill you in...

Forget Liberty and Vice City – this is Lost Heaven, 1930. Sure, it looks like a nice town, but there's a war going on. We want your help. We'll need you to drive any one of 48 period automobiles. They're not what you're used to, though: they've got thin wheels, shuddery engines, and the handling's looser than Squealin' Sam's jaw. We'll need ya to run us to jobs and smuggle contraband, and if you get results the boss might fix you some missions of your own.

That's when you'll be using your fists and your shooters. You'll need to steady your hand for Lost Heaven – there's none of that automatic targeting junk here – just you, a crosshair, and your aim. We'll kit you out with a piece, from thumping Magnums to rattling Tommy Guns, but sometimes you'll have to rely on ya knuckles or pick up a skull-buster, such as a baseball bat or iron bar.

You'll run into other gangs out for a piece of our rackets, and watch the cops – they're coming down hard. Any traffic offence they'll be all over you quicker than you can say spaghetti.

Alright bud, that's all I can tell ya just now. The boss will call when he's ready. Until then, sit tight and keep your mouth shut, capisce?



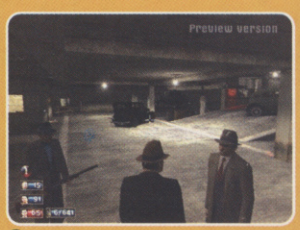
Taking on a bunch of goons is much more satisfying with a Tommy Gun

Hold down the R1 button for a more powerful swing, or just get a baseball bat

The hand-to-hand combat is just battering the button, but it should get tightened up

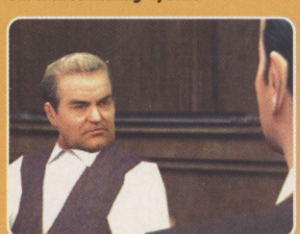
MADE MEN

In this town it's not what you know, but who you know that counts. Take a good, long look at this set of ugly mugs, bud. These guys are your family now, and family ties don't break...

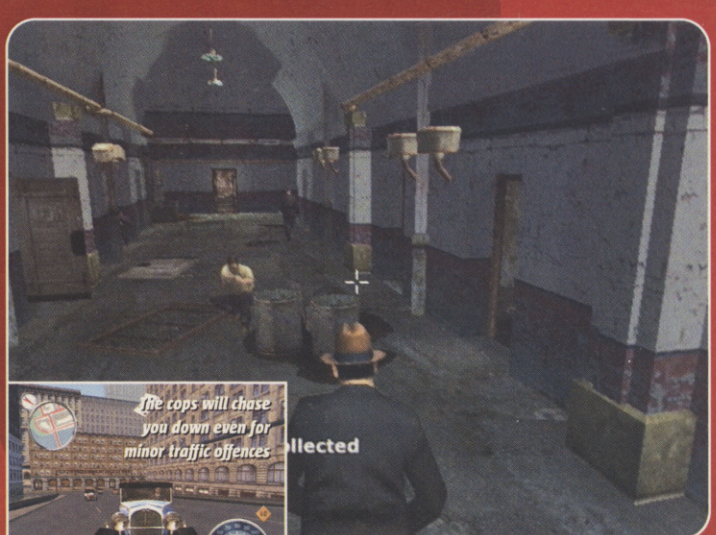


Paulie and Sam are the Don's right-hand men. They're handy guys to have around in a shootout

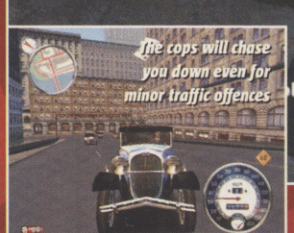
Go and see Vincenzo for a piece. Talk nice and he might even sort you out with something 'special'

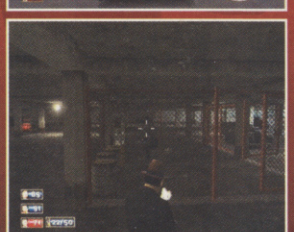


The man himself, the boss, Don Salieri. A good man to please, but a dangerous man to cross



The shooting sections are closer to first-person shooters than Grand Theft Auto's third-person action





As a trigger man it's your job to throw lead at any wiseguy in your way

Lost Heaven captures the atmosphere of a 1930s gangster town well

CVG OPINION

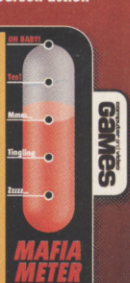
Say, what's the big idea? GTA with 1930s wiseguys is what – only with a cool spin. We're looking forward to playing the finished version. **Graeme**

WE LOVE

- Proper gangster atmos
- Shooting in particular is solid
- Dialogue you don't hate

WE HATE

- Face it, it can't scale GTA heights
- Jalopy, anybody? Thought not
- Fighting feels way random



TEXT TO WIN

TEXT YOUR ANSWERS TO **84004** (T-MOBILE USERS TEXT 85140)

How to enter: first type 'CVG XMA COMP' then type out the letters that correspond to the correct answer. For example: **'CVG XMA COMP B'*** *CALLS COST NO MORE THAN 50P*

ICE AND EASY

NEVER PLAY GAMES ON A SKAGGY TELLY AGAIN!

XMAS COMPO BLOWOUT #1

CVG's Santa sack is heaving with so many prizes this month we're having to offload *three* times in one issue. And given that there's about as much chance of a snowflake in Hell as there is a white Christmas, we're here to bring you something super-cool for chilling out. No hunching over the Yule log watching Sleeping Beauty On Ice with granny, oh no.

To celebrate the release of class-on-a-stick puck-slapper NHL Hitz Pro, Santa CVG has teamed up with those helpful elves at Midway to offer you the chance to win a Toshiba 28-inch Flat Screen TV*, a PS2 and a copy of the game, plus NHL legend Chris Pronger's Original Team Hockey top! Four runners-up will snag a copy of the game each.

Entering the compo couldn't be easier, so pull your finger out and fill in that thar coupon.

** Model may be subject to change without prior notice depending on availability*

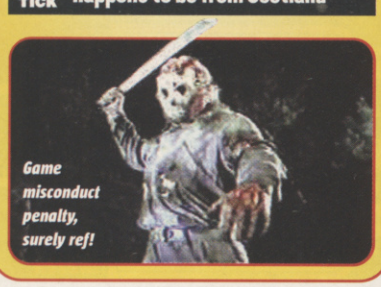
WIN!

THEMZ THA RULEZ

Yeah, yeah, you know your wrist shots from your slap shots, and can spot someone goal sucking or chucking the knuckles from a mile off. But just in case ice hockey rules leave you cold and the terminology sounds like a Dutch smut movie, our heavy hintage should sort you right out.

QUESTION Players penalised for starting a fight get an extra penalty for unsportsman-like conduct if...

- ☐ TICK **A: They're wearing a face shield to protect their pretty features**
- ☐ TICK **B: They're carrying a rocket launcher and they mean to use it**
- ☐ TICK **C: One of their grandparents happens to be from Scotland**



Game misconduct penalty, surely ref!

CUT ALONG HERE

GO ON, WIN IT

Fill out this coupon and send entries to:

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Dennis Publishing
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Bradford
BD1 5RZ

I think the answer is... A. ☐ B. ☐ C. ☐ (tick one)

First name:

Surname:

Address:

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Year of birth:

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A-C-E-H-M-N-S

SIBERIAN STRIKE EPISODE II

CODE : 69119
C

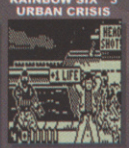
EARTH INVASION

CODE : 61089
A-H-I-N-S

PLANET ZERO

CODE : 73320
A-E-G-H-N-S

RAINBOW SIX™ 3 URBAN CRISIS



CODE : 50387
A-H-I

ACTION

XIII

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C-E-N-S-T

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MARCEL DESAILLY PRO SOCCER

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RAYMAN® BOWLING

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SUMMER VOLLEY

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A-H

PUZZLE

Gameloft's SOLITAIRE

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A-B-C-E-H-I-M-N

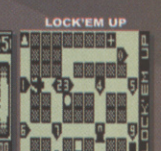
CLUSTER PIRATE

CODE : 97481
A

GAMELOFT CASINO

CODE : 51246
A

LOCK'EM UP



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A-H

PLATFORM

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M-N-S

Text "PLAY + PHONE MODEL" to 84050*

Example: If you have a Nokia 7650, text "PLAY 7650"
Then follow the instructions Make sure, your phone is WAP-enabled.

To check compatibility, match the letters between phones and games.

- **Nokia** 7210, 7250, 6610, 6100, 5100, 3300, 3100, 6800 : **E**
- **Nokia** 7650, 3650, N-Gage : **C**
- **Nokia** 3510i : **N**
- **Nokia** 3410 : **A**
- **Siemens** S55, M55 : **G**
- **Siemens** SL55 : **P**
- **Siemens** M50 : **H**
- **Siemens** C55 : **I**
- **Sony Ericsson** T610 : **B**
- **Motorola** T720 : **M**
- **Sharp** GX10 : **S**
- **Sharp** GX20 : **T**

*UK only. Each SMS costs £1. (A b&w game costs £2 and a colour game costs £3).
You will also incur your normal SMS and WAP charges.
Please make sure you have sufficient credit to receive your order.
You must be 16 or over to use this service. Helpline number: 070 9204 4827 or javasupport@gameloft.com.
Gameloft UK Ltd, 75 Cannon Street, London, EC4N 5BN.

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THE 10 BEST MOBILE PHONE GAMES

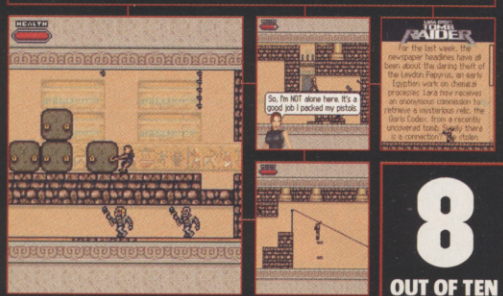
YOU CAN TURN YOUR COLOUR-SCREEN PHONE INTO A GAMES ARCADE WITH A FEW CHOICE DOWNLOADS. HERE'S THE BEST PHONY GAMES AND CONSOLES

LOOK! ALTHOUGH THESE ARE GREAT GAMES THEY'RE FOR YOUR PHONE, SO DON'T EXPECT 'EM TO BE PS2-QUALITY!

1 TOMB RAIDER: THE OSIRIS CODEX

PRICE: £5
WORKS ON: Motorola T720i, Nokia 7650/3650, Sharp GX10/20

This isn't a patch on the full-3D extravaganza that is Tomb Raider on N-Gage, but then it doesn't cost 30 quid either, plus you don't have to use a phone the size of a fillet steak. Lara's disappointingly two-dimensional, of course, as are the ruins she robs, but she can climb ropes, pick up items, open doors, shoot baddies, climb ladders – pretty much the same as full-sized Lara, except without the wiggly ponytail and the other feminine charms. There's enough here to keep you busy for a good few hours: not bad, considering most mobile phone explore 'em ups entertain you for about five minutes, then you find it's more fun to go back to picking your nose with your phone aerial.



8 OUT OF TEN

2 THE TERMINATOR

PRICE: £1.50 + 50p per level
WORKS ON: Panasonic GD87e, Sagem my-G5, Sagem my-X6

Obviously, they've had to snip off a few non-essential scenes from the Arnie flicks to get this to fit on a mobile phone screen, so what you get is row upon row of grinning metal skeletons advancing towards you through the ruins of Los Angeles and disintegrating in your righteous gunfire, and very little else, but it's fun enough to work off those thumb calories for a couple of hours. You can download extra levels once you've defeated Skynet's evil plans, so the challenge is theoretically never-ending. Just like the movie franchise.

8 OUT OF TEN

3 SNOOD

PRICE: £5
WORKS ON: Nokia 3100, 3510i, 3300, 7210, 7250, 3650, 7650

Five quid for a puzzle experience even more addictive than breathing. Snood's probably the best of the puzzle games in phone land. It's VERY similar to the classic Bust-a-Move, but a bit slower, so perfect for playing on the move. Fire a 'snood' at an advancing column of snoods, link three, pop them, repeat until you notice you've missed your stop, then run off the bus very fast. Most classic puzzle games that have appeared on console are now available to download for your phone, and mostly unlicensed, so just look out for similar names – i.e for Puyo Pop, look around for Buyo Buyo, or for Tetris, look for games called Block Attack.

9 OUT OF TEN

4 PRINCE OF PERSIA

PRICE: £5
WORKS ON: Nokia 7650/3650, Motorola T720i,

This classic 2D adventure is perhaps a bit on the simple side these days – the swordfights can feel a bit like a rock-scissors-paper match in hell – but there's enough booby-traps to dodge and potions to pick up to make the Sultan's palace 480% more interesting than, say, your phone's address book.

8 OUT OF TEN

5 SPY SHOOTOUT

PRICE: £5
WORKS ON: Nokia 3510i, 5500, 6100, 6600, 7250, 3650, 7650 , Sharp GX10/GX20

Calling your main character 'Penny Peril, Britain's sexiest secret agent' is so lame it had us reaching for our cyanide capsules, but this point-and-click shooter isn't half bad. Cardboard cut-out men pop up from behind cupboards, you kill them – not likely to break the originality bank, but it's fast enough to get you twitching even when you're not playing.

8 OUT OF TEN

BEST GAME PHONES

SHARP GX20

PAY NO MORE THAN £80 to £250 with contract

INFO
www.vodafone.co.uk/live

This beast has got a phat screen so the games look great, and the games from Vodafone's website are all reasonably priced. Cool.

SONY ERICSSON T600/T610

PAY NO MORE THAN Free to £100 with contract to £250 with contract

INFO
www.sonyericsson.co.uk

Just as easy to use as a Nokia, but games tend to run faster, look better and are a lot smoother. Not a great selection of games at the moment, though.

NOKIA 7250

PAY NO MORE THAN Free to £219 with contract

INFO
www.nokia.com

Not a bad game phone, but because it's one of the most popular Nokias there's a load of rubbish games out there. You've been warned.

NOKIA 3650

PAY NO MORE THAN Free to £100 with contract.

INFO
www.nokia.com

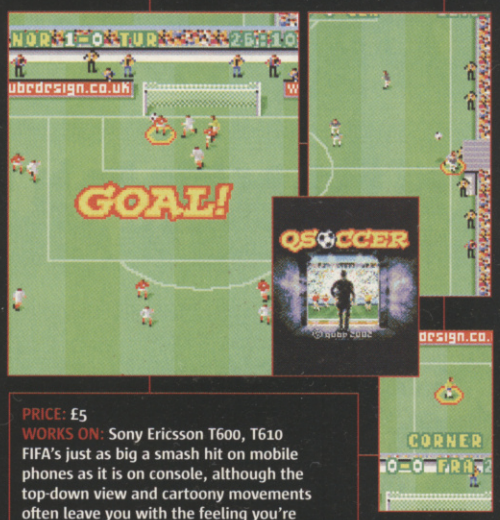
This beefy bee-yatch looks a bit weird, but it is great for playing games on. But the keypad layout is a bit odd and takes a bit of getting used to.

6 FERRARI RACING 2

PRICE: £5
WORKS ON: Nokia 7650/3650, Motorola T720
This Ferrari racer is basically a stripped down F1 game, and it's a dazzler to look at. It's also the first multiplayer racer on phone – you can text a ghost of your best time to mates so they can race against a transparent version of you turning in your best performance.

7 OUT OF TEN

7 Q SOCCER

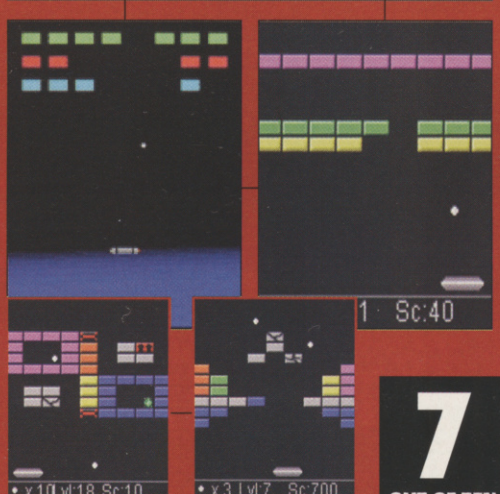


PRICE: £5
WORKS ON: Sony Ericsson T600, T610
FIFA's just as big a smash hit on mobile phones as it is on console, although the top-down view and cartoony movements often leave you with the feeling you're playing pinball, not football. You're better off with rival Q-Soccer, which looks more cartoony, but has better ball movement and feels more 3D, although the fact you can't get it for Nokia handsets is a bit of a bind for fans of the Finn phones.

6 OUT OF TEN

8 ATARI BREAKOUT

PRICE: £5
WORKS ON: Nokia 7650, 3650, 7250
Breakout-style games where you bat a ball to knock bricks out of a wall are one of the most common styles of game available for phones. Watch what you buy, though, cos cheapo imitations tend to be so jerky it looks like you're playing a flick-book, and clock in on the fun scale just below root canal surgery. Vodafone Live offer the original, and it's great.



7 OUT OF TEN

9 WORMS

PRICE: £5
WORKS ON: Nokia 3650, 5100, 7250, Sharp GX10, GX20
The turn-based action of strategy classic Worms is just perfect for phone gaming – you can easily look up from the screen to check you haven't missed your stop/fallen down a manhole/run someone over. It's very much the same as on console, although the lack of multiplayer's a king-sized drag. Owners of weirdo phones like Orange's SPV can get a 'quite similar' game called Snails from www.handango.com. Quite similar in the same way, say, two cans of Heinz beans are similar.

8 OUT OF TEN

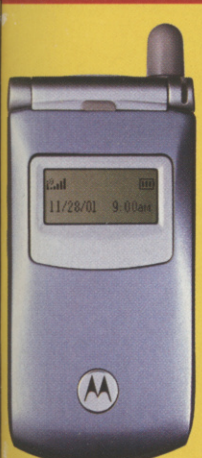
10 LOTUS CHALLENGE CITY RACING

PRICE: £5
WORKS ON: Nokia 3510i, 5500, 6100, 6600, 7250, 3650, 7650 , Sharp GX10/GX20
This is from the people who did the full-sized Lotus Challenge games on consoles, and it's about the best racer out yet for mobiles – ie it doesn't fall at any of the usual mobile racing game hurdles. More than one car on the track? Check! Tracks that aren't just a flat grey strip? Yup! Recognisable, real motor vehicles? For sure! Impressive-looking Lotus Elans and Lotus Elises, to be precise.

6 OUT OF TEN

WHERE TO GET 'EM

The best place to pick up games for your phone is always the website of your service provider - ie Vodafone, Orange, O2 or Virgin – or, even better, the WAP version. Most games can be downloaded straight across the airwaves like ringtones, and will cost between £1 and £5. Extra levels, characters and so on can often be bought for between 50p and £1, although a lot of the games will keep on generating levels randomly until you get bored, run out of batteries or die. You can also pick up games from websites like these:
www.myphonegames.co.uk
javagames.org.uk
www.themobilegamer.co.uk
Be warned though, the quality's not always so high, and you can end up with low-rent rubbish.

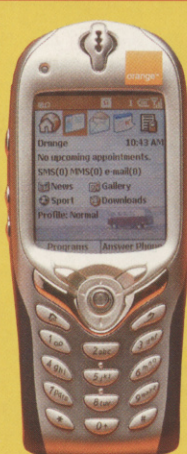


MOTOROLA T720I

PAY NO MORE THAN Free to £100 with contract.
INFO
www.hellomoto.com
Hard to use because the menu system is complicated, and the game that comes with it (Moto GP) is rubbish, but it's still pretty tasty for downloadable on-the-go games.

NOKIA 3100

PAY NO MORE THAN Free to £30 with contract.
INFO
www.nokia.com
Not only is this a lot of phone for your mobile dollar, but it looks tasty, too. Not only that, but it glows in the dark, and plays just as well as all the other Nokias.



ORANGE SPV-E100

PAY NO MORE THAN Free to £199 with contract
INFO
www.orange.co.uk
This phone's so big it'll cripple your hand while simultaneously breaking all your pockets, but it's the most powerful phone. On the downside it's not that great for playing games.

NOKIA 5100

PAY NO MORE THAN: Free to £70 with contract.
INFO:
www.nokia.com
This can't play quite as many games as a lot of other colour Nokias, but even so, it's good value and it looks wicked.

GET THE MOST OUT OF THE GAMES YOU'VE GOT

EXTENDED PLAY

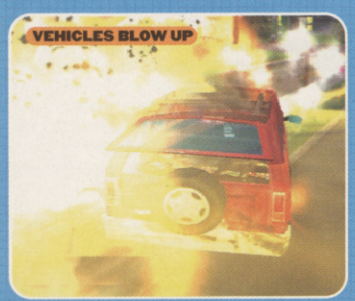
Why drive cars when you can blow 'em up? Check our killer tips for Simpsons Hit & Run and a whole lot of other stuff too. No more of that damn fool practising for you...

THE SIMPSONS HIT & RUN

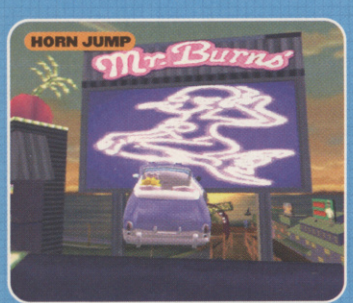
Enter the following cheats in the main menu in the living room. (Hold down all the shoulder buttons – on the GameCube pad don't hold down Z.) You'll unlock these nifty bonus extras:

● PS2: X, Circle, X, Circle ● GC: A, B, A, B ● Xbox: A, B, A, B

● PS2: Triangle, Triangle, Triangle, Triangle ● GC: X, X, X, X ● Xbox: X, X, X, X



● PS2: Triangle, Triangle, Square, Square ● GC: Y, Y, X, X ● Xbox: Y, Y, X, X



● PS2: Square, Square, Square, Triangle ● GC: X, X, X, Y ● Xbox: X, X, X, Y

● PS2: Circle, Circle, Circle, X ● C: B, B, B, A ● Xbox: B, B, B, A

● PS2: Triangle, Triangle, Circle, Square ● GC: Y, Y, B, X ● Xbox: Y, Y, B, X

AMPLITUDE

Entering the following codes while playing to unlock the following extras:

BLUR EFFECT
R3, R3, R3, R3, L3, L3, L3, L3, R3

RANDOM NOTE POSITIONS
X, X, Left, Left, R3, R3, Right, Right

TRANSPARENT PANEL SURFACES
L3-R3-L3-L3-R3-L3-R3-R3-L3

TUNNEL MODE
L3-L3-L3-R3-R3-R3-L3-R3-L3

FREESTYLE METAL X

Enter the following in the codes screen to unlock these lovely extras:

$1000,000
sugardaddy

RIDERS AND BIKES
dudemaster

BIKE PARTS
garageking

ALL LEVELS AND EVENTS
universe

POSTERS AND PHOTO SLOTS
seeall

SONGS
hearall

COSTUMES
johnnye

STUN SLOTS
fleximan

VIDEOS
watchall

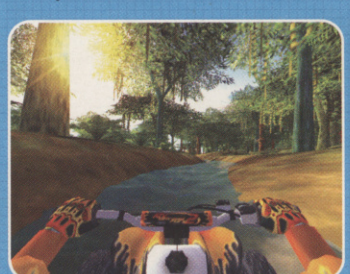
ATV OFFROAD FURY 2

Enter the following codes in the cheats section (under Profile Editor, Unlock Items):

CODE	EFFECT
IGIVEUP	Unlock Everything
SHOWROOM	All ATVs
FLYPAPER	Wrecks disabled/enabled
GIMMEPTS	1,000 Profile Points
GAMEON	All Games
TRLBLAZR	All Tracks
THREADS	All Equipment
GOLDCUPS	All Championship Events
GABRIEL	Unlock San Jacinto Isles
EATDIRT	Aggressive AI enabled/disabled

BONUS VEHICLE AND COSTUME
Create a profile on a memory card that has save data from ATV Offroad Fury on it

MAXIMUM STATS
Name your driver GINGHAM



JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY

Press ~ to bring down the console then type in devmapall to enable cheats. Type in any of the following then press Enter:

EFFECT	CODE
Drive AT-ST	drive_atst
God mode	god
Ammo	give ammo
Armor	give armor
Health	give health
Kill NPCs	npc kill all
Level skip	victory
Taunt	taunt
No NPC AI	notarget

YOUR BEST TIPS

If you've got a star quality tip that you want to share or if you'd like our resident expert Barny to answer a query, send it into us at:

CVGTIPS@DENNIS.CO.UK

CVG TIPS
COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAMES
DENNIS PUBLISHING
9 DALLINGTON STREET
LONDON EC1V 0BQ

FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Enter the following cheats during gameplay for these bonuses:

CODE	EFFECT
Y, A, X, B, B, LEFT	Blind Enemies
Y, A, X, B, B, DOWN	Fast mode
Y, A, X, B, B, RIGHT	Slow Mode
Y, A, X, B, X, UP	Fly
Y, A, X, B, A, DOWN	Full Charisma
Y, A, X, B, Y, DOWN	Heavy Gun
UP, DOWN, BLACK, WHITE	Revive
Y, A, X, B, Y, UP	Rifle
Y, A, X, B, Y, LEFT	Rocket Launcher
Y, A, X, B, B, UP	Shotgun
Y, A, X, B, Y, RIGHT	Sniper Rifle
Y, A, X, B, A, LEFT	Nail Gun
Y, A, X, B, A, RIGHT	Ammo

FREEDOM FIGHTERS

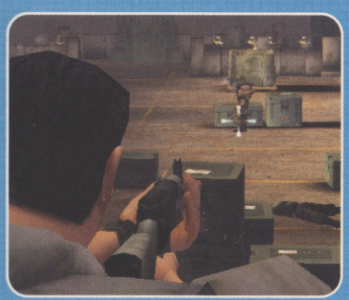
Enter the following cheats during gameplay for these effects:

CODE	EFFECT
Y, A, B, X, X, LEFT	Invisibility
Y, A, B, X, X, RIGHT	Slow motion
Y, A, B, X, X, DOWN	Fast motion
Y, A, B, X, A, RIGHT	Ammo
Y, A, B, X, A, DOWN	Charisma
Y, A, B, X, A, LEFT	Nail gun
Y, A, B, X, Y, R	Machine gun
Y, A, B, X, Y, RIGHT	Sniper rifle
Y, A, B, X, Y, LEFT	Rocket launcher
Y, A, B, X, Y, DOWN	Heavy gun
Y, A, B, X, X, R	Shotgun

FREEDOM FIGHTERS

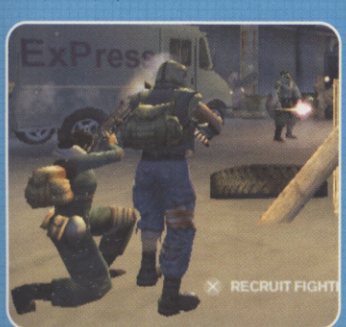
Type the following codes in during gameplay for these little bonuses:

CODE	EFFECT
ioigod	God mode
ioiflymo	Ragdolls
ioicharisma	Charisma
ioiammo	Ammo
ioiblind	Invisibility
ioifastmo	Fast mode
ioislowmo	Slow mode



FREEDOM FIGHTER

CODE	EFFECT
Triangle, X, Square, Circle, Circle, Left	Invisibility
Triangle, X, Square, Circle, Circle, Right	Slow mode
Triangle, X, Square, Circle, Circle, Down	Fast mode
Triangle, X, Square, Circle, X, Right	Ammo
Triangle, X, Square, Circle, X, Down	Charisma
Triangle, X, Square, Circle, X, Left	Nail gun
Triangle, X, Square, Circle, Triangle, Up	Machine gun
Triangle, X, Square, Circle, Triangle, Right	Sniper rifle
Triangle, X, Square, Circle, Triangle, Left	Rocket launcher
Triangle, X, Square, Circle, Triangle, Down	Heavy gun
Triangle, X, Square, Circle, Circle, Up	Shotgun



OTOGI: MYTH OF DEMONS

The following tips were sent in by Dan from Glasgow. Cheers for that, Dan!

SECOND PLAY

Beat the game once and this allows you to use weapons from previous games

ORCHID MALEVOLENCE

Defeat the Hydra in stage 25

MOONLIGHT SWORD

Free all the souls in the first 28 stages

STARSKY & HUTCH

Enter your name VADKRAM in the profile screen to unlock everything

NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2

Enter the following codes at the main menu:

ASTON MARTIN V12 VANQUISH

R2, Right, R2, Right, Triangle, Left, Triangle, Left

F50

L1, Triangle, L1, Triangle, Right, L2, Right, L2

F550

L1, Square, L1, Square, Right, R1, Right, R1

MERCEDES CLK

Triangle, Left, Left, Left, L1, L2, L2, Left

RC CAR

Triangle, L1, R1, L1, L1, L1, Triangle

FORD TS50

Right, Left, Right, Right, Left, R2, Square, R2, Square

LOTUS ELISE

Triangle, R2, Triangle, R2 Left, Square, Left, Square

LAMBORGHINI DIABLO

Right, R2, Right, R2, R1, L1, R1, L1

BMW Z8

Square, Right, Square, Right, R2, Triangle, R2, Triangle

CORVETTE Z06

Left, R2, Left, R2, L1, R1, L1, R1

MCLAREN F1 LM

Square, L1, Square, L1, Triangle, Right, Triangle, Right

PORSCHE CARERRA GT

Left, Right, Left, Right, R1, R2, R1, R2

REALLY STUCK?

Absolutely stumped on a game? Ridiculed by your mates? There is hope:

THE COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAMES TIPS HELPLINE.

0906 466 4659

Open seven days a week, 8am-11pm. On the very rare occasion that they can't help, your query will be passed on to a support team, who guarantees to find you an answer within 24 hours. Calls cost £1.50 per minute at all times. Charges will appear on your standard telephone bill. If you do not pay the bill yourself, seek permission from whoever does before calling. In case of problems, please call Customer Services on 0870 800 6155.

BARNY'S PROBLEM CORNER

Is your brain leaking into your boots? Allow Barny to sort out all your problems. Although he's not much cop at girl questions

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: WIND WAKER

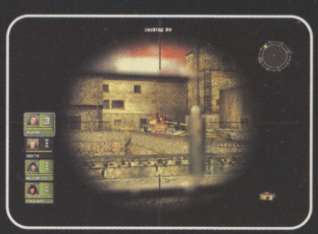
Q. How do you kill the giant sea monsters? They suck me in and then I end up being teleported to a completely different place on the map and it's really annoying.
Jon, Dorset

A. *To kill the Giant Octos you need to have the bow and arrows. As you circle the monster target the creature's eyes. You need to hit each eye three times to knock it out. Once you knock out the eyes the creature will be defeated. Don't forget to drop your hook to see the treasure it was guarding.*

CONFLICT DESERT STORM 2

Q. Help! I'm really stuck on the second mission (yes I know I'm rubbish). I get to the bridge and a tank comes round the corner. I know I have to blow it up with the Laser Designator but the tank always shoots me before I have time to lock on.
Gilbert876, via email

A. *There is a building on the left side of the street. Go to the upper room and crouch by the first window (the window that's partially covered). Equip the Laser Designator and inch your way so that you are on the left edge of the window. From here you should be able to target the tank through the obscured window without any chance of being battered by the tank.*



GRAND THEFT AUTO 3

Q. How do you get a tank without using any cheats? I know you get one by finishing the game, but what's the use of having one once the game is over?
StealthSlayer, via email

A. *Make sure you can get a full wanted level and get full health and armour. You should also have all the different weapons with spare ammo. Go to the multistorey car park in Staunton Island (the one near your hideout). Start killing people on the street then quickly drive up to the roof of the car park. From here snipe people below and lob grenades. When a helicopter shows up shoot it down with your rocket launcher. Keep killing people until the army show up. Now you need to lure a tank into the ground level of the car park. The best way to do this is to drive a fast car very quickly out, then straight back in. A tank should come crashing after you. Hide on the upper level and lob a few grenades down to clear away any soldiers. Equip the flame-thrower and walk towards the tank flaming anything that moves. Once it's clear get in the tank and drive it full speed back to your hideout. Save the game then reload it to get rid of your wanted level.*

METROID PRIME

Q. How do you beat the Omega Pirate boss near the end of the game? It kills me every time.
Andrew Smith, London

A. *Make sure you have all the Energy Tanks and Super Missiles. Scan it first. Target the armour on either a leg or an arm and charge up your Power Beam. Strafe and jump to avoid his attacks. Keep avoiding his attacks until his hand stops glowing, then fire a Super Missile to blow off a chunk of armour. Repeat this until all his armour is gone. It will summon some pirates. Either kill them very quickly or ignore them (unless they're ice in which case kill them first). Switch to your X-Ray visor and look at each phazon pool. The Omega Pirate will appear at one of them. Lock on and fire a Super Missile at him (if you're quick you can get two off). This is the only way to damage him. He'll reappear at another pool so locate him and shoot again. Once he's regenerated his armour repeat the entire process from the beginning.*

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA PLAYERS' GUIDE

Ed Zitron know all about fighting crime... so take a tip from him

1 GETTING STARTED

THE THRONE RACE

You're an emissary of the law, so it's a bad idea to shoot people at random, run pedestrians over or kill other policemen. If you cause this sort of trouble, expect a backlash as the civil unrest meter rises. The higher it gets, the more crimes happen. Pedestrians will fight back and when the meter reaches critical status, SWAT teams will hunt you down.

THE 24/7 TRAINING MISSIONS

The Dojo missions teach you new moves, such as back-attacks and ground-attacks. In Bonus Cruisin', they unlock new grab moves.

LEARNER DRIVER

Driving missions allow you to learn new manoeuvres, such as peel-out and faster turns. In Bonus Cruisin' unlock better, faster cars.

TAKE AIM...

The shooting missions allow you to upgrade your basic gun with extras such as laser sights and faster reload. In Bonus Cruisin' unlock stronger guns, with a higher capacity.

GOOD COP

Move in on the crime, taking care not to cause any damage to passers-by or the criminals

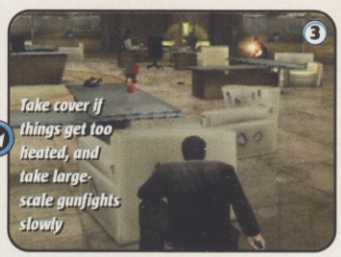
Fire your gun into the air to scare them, or flash your badge to make them give up

If they give up, arrest them and receive a point of Good Karma

GENERAL TIPS

1 GUNFIGHTNG

Use bullet time in large groups of enemies, or leap forward to eliminate one target quickly

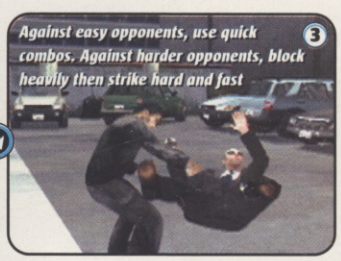


Take cover if things get too heated, and take large-scale gunfights slowly

Keep moving in clearings! Strafe, roll and dodge to avoid bullets if you can't find cover

2 CLOSE COMBAT

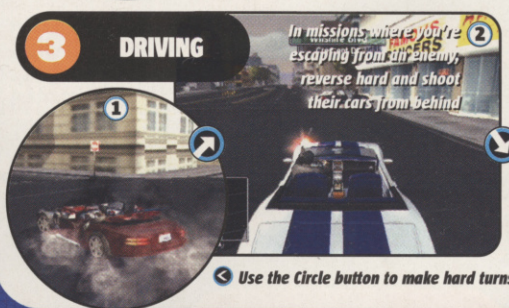
Learn finishing moves quickly as they allow you to dish out damage far faster then normal attacks



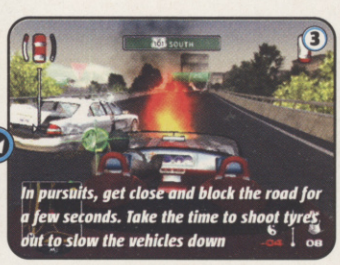
Against easy opponents, use quick combos. Against harder opponents, block heavily then strike hard and fast

How high or low is your opponent hitting? Hit them back where they're not defending

3 DRIVING



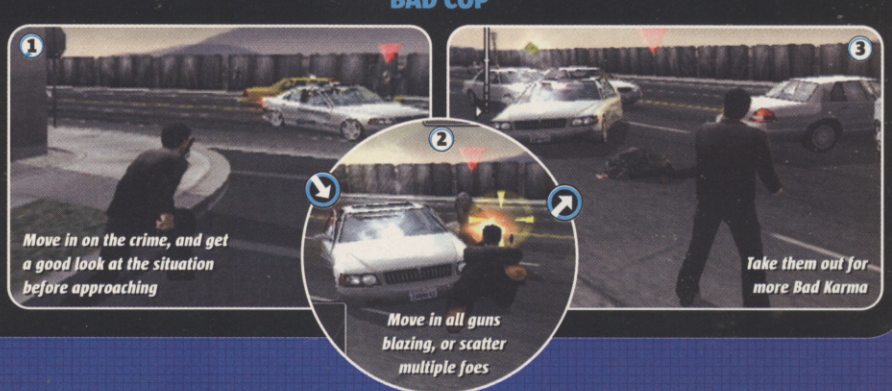
In missions where you're escaping from an enemy, reverse hard and shoot their cars from behind



In pursuits, get close and block the road for a few seconds. Take the time to shoot tyres out to slow the vehicles down

Use the Circle button to make hard turns, though it'll cost you speed

BAD COP



Move in on the crime, and get a good look at the situation before approaching

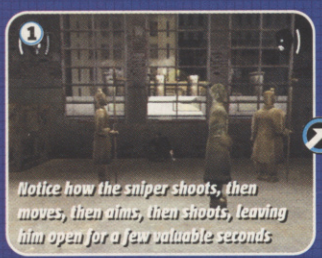
Move in all guns blazing, or scatter multiple foes

Take them out for more Bad Karma

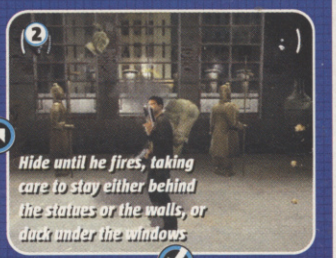
TANNING THE TOUGH GUYS

So, you've got to grips with life on the street in LA, but what about beating the tough bosses? No worries, we'll see you right

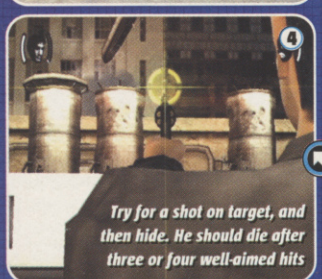
1 EPISODE 2 MISSION 9: FINALE - SNIPER ASSASSIN



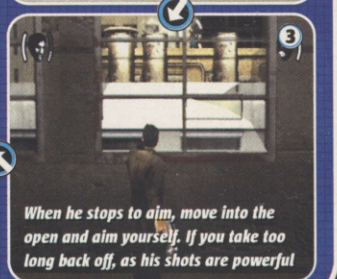
Notice how the sniper shoots, then moves, then aims, then shoots, leaving him open for a few valuable seconds



Hide until he fires, taking care to stay either behind the statues or the walls, or duck under the windows

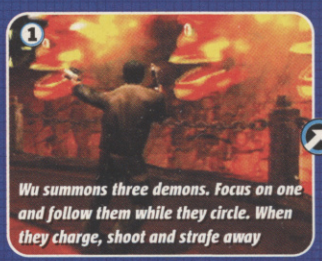


Try for a shot on target, and then hide. He should die after three or four well-aimed hits

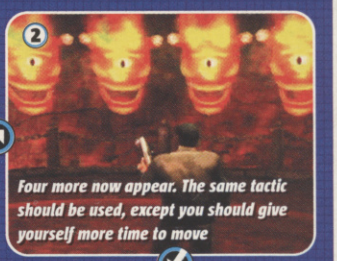


When he stops to aim, move into the open and aim yourself. If you take too long back off, as his shots are powerful

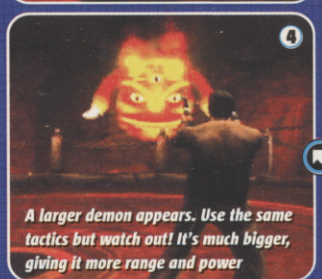
2 EPISODE 6 MISSION 5: INNER DEMONS



Wu summons three demons. Focus on one and follow them while they circle. When they charge, shoot and strafe away



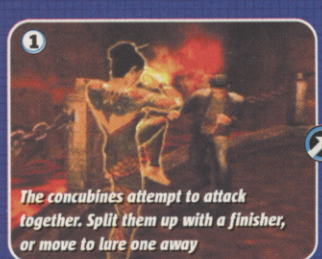
Four more now appear. The same tactic should be used, except you should give yourself more time to move



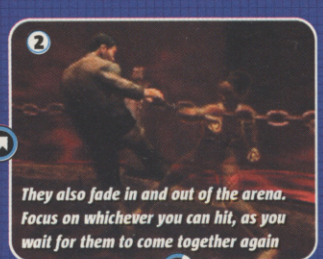
A larger demon appears. Use the same tactics but watch out! It's much bigger, giving it more range and power

Five more appear. They take much longer to pass, so move while shooting the front demon and stay well back

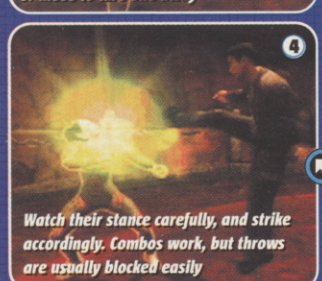
3 EPISODE 6 MISSION 6: DIE, DIE, MY CONCUBINE



The concubines attempt to attack together. Split them up with a finisher, or move to lure one away



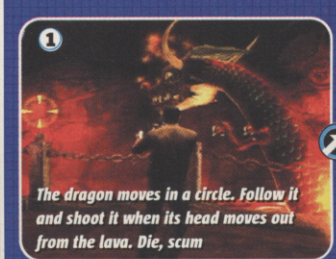
They also fade in and out of the arena. Focus on whichever you can hit, as you wait for them to come together again



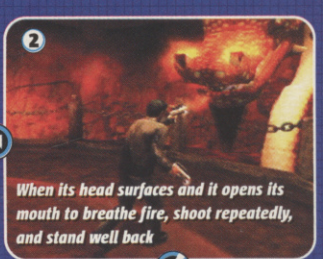
Watch their stance carefully, and strike accordingly. Combos work, but throws are usually blocked easily

Don't let them throw you, as this sets you on fire - adding to the already large damage of the throw

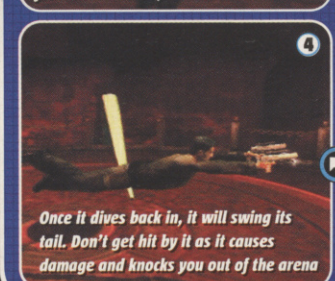
4 EPISODE 6 MISSION 7: FINALE - NIGHTMARE



The dragon moves in a circle. Follow it and shoot it when its head moves out from the lava. Die, scum



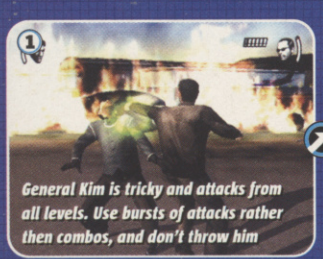
When its head surfaces and it opens its mouth to breathe fire, shoot repeatedly, and stand well back



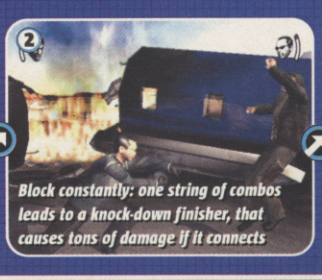
Once it dives back in, it will swing its tail. Don't get hit by it as it causes damage and knocks you out of the arena

Roll out of the way, but stay away from the sides as you may roll into the lava if the chains have been broken

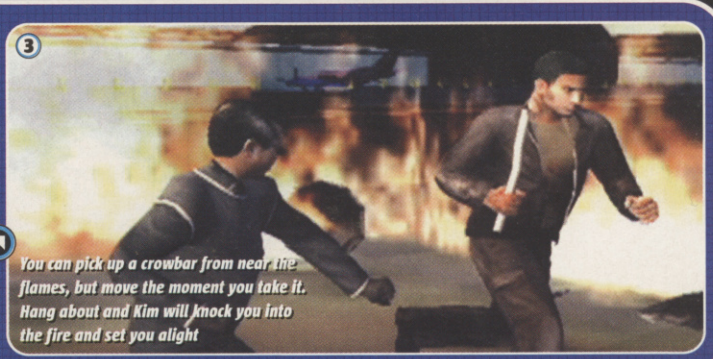
5 EPISODE 8 MISSION 7: FINALE - PUPPET MASTER



General Kim is tricky and attacks from all levels. Use bursts of attacks rather then combos, and don't throw him



Block constantly: one string of combos leads to a knock-down finisher, that causes tons of damage if it connects



You can pick up a crowbar from near the flames, but move the moment you take it. Hang about and Kim will knock you into the fire and set you alight

XIII PLAYERS' GUIDE

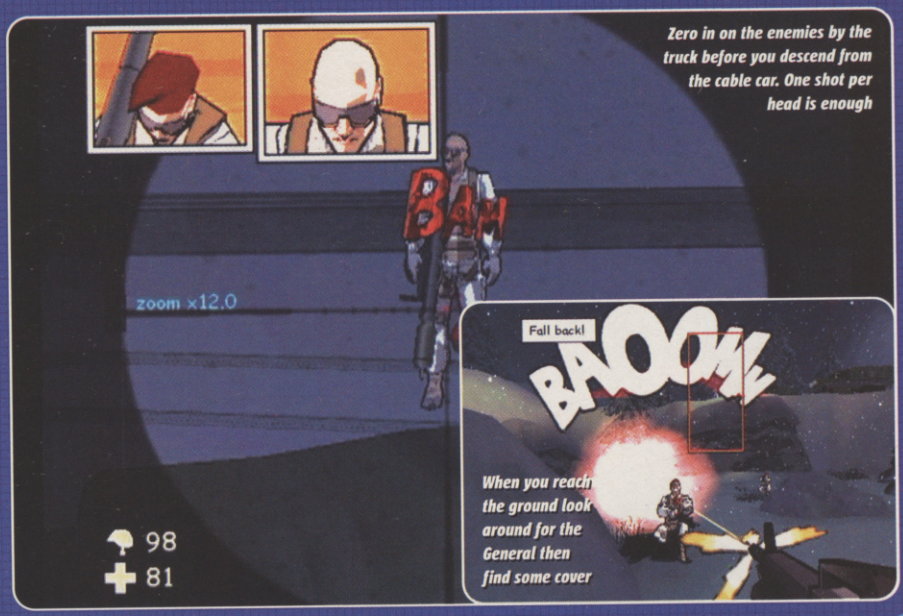
Is XIII unlucky for you? Barny Zoeller walks you through the all the trickiest moments of this cartoon shoot 'em up

2 CABLE CAR

As soon as you start, equip the sniper rifle and look out of the back window. Murder the guards by the truck then swiftly climb to the roof and use your grappling hook to reach the ground. Find the General then gun down the two nearest soldiers and snipe the RPG on the ridge nearby.

Duck into the cave and defend the General. Follow the path by the cave but keep your eyes on the ridge to the right. Equip the sniper rifle about halfway along and eliminate the guard that appears high up in the distance before he vaporises you with his RPG. When soldiers appear on the ridge behind you lob a couple of grenades up to clear them out and machine gun anyone who survives. Dash up the hill towards the helicopter and kill any remaining soldiers you find.

Get behind the mounted machine gun near the helicopter. Kill the soldiers coming from where you were, then point the gun to the right and mow down the ones that come over the crest of the hill. When they're dead get on the chopper and go...



Zero in on the enemies by the truck before you descend from the cable car. One shot per head is enough

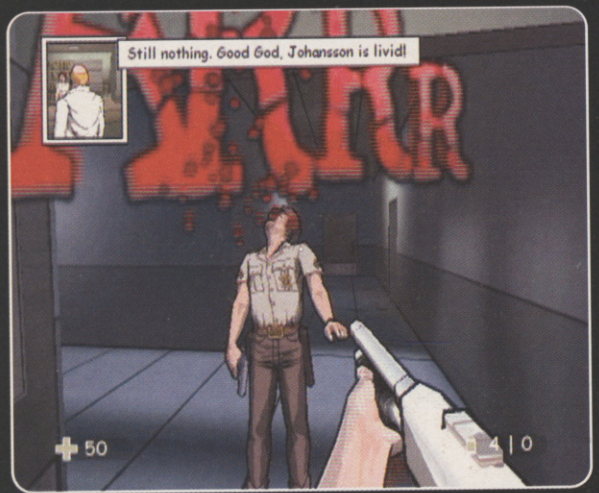
When you reach the ground look around for the General then find some cover

2 DOC JOHANSSON

Move around the rooms until the guard shows up then beat him up and grab his key. Use it to open the locked room and get the security pass inside. Enter reception with it, but stay low otherwise the receptionist will raise the alarm.

Swipe the caged door and go left. Either head into the side rooms to sneak past or start shooting the guards. Turn right at the end and go through to the morgue. Knock out the medical staff inside then open the drawers to climb up to the vent in the corner.

Smash the grate and climb in. Follow the vent and then walk round until you fall in with Dr Johansson. Equip your most powerful gun and aim for his head. Sidestep to avoid whatever he flings at you. If he starts chasing you back off and keep away. If he touches you back off until your head clears. Once he's dead get his key and enter the office. Open the safe and get what is inside. Get the Important Document from behind the doctor's portrait as well, then release the nurse and take her hostage. (First make sure all your guns are loaded.) Walk out and kill the guards. When you run out of ammo switch to a different gun rather than reload. Make your way to the door at reception, kill the guard that opens it and step in.



You can blast your way through this stealth-based level without any consequences. Just don't kill any innocents

Use the Colt pistol and aim for the heads of the guards. They don't move very quickly so getting the hang of this shouldn't take long

3 SPADS CAMP 1

Swim through and climb the ladder. Get ammo from the lockers then open the door. Move quickly round to the right and move behind the huts. Get your crossbow ready to take down a patrolling guard. In between two you will find a health pack. From here shoot the guard in the tower.

Move back behind the first hut and shoot another patrolling guard in the back then finish the singer. Use the machine gun on the guard that appears from the far hut. Get more items from the hut then enter the large building and gun down the soldier inside. Open the door and crossbow the guard by the half-finished building then do the same for the one on the right. Run across and get behind where the first guard was. From here you can easily finish off another guard who should have his back to you. In the next area move left until you see two guards talking. After they walk apart kill the bald one, then snipe the tower guard. Move closer to the middle and watch each guard and kill them when no one else is looking. Go through the next warehouse and open the door inside. Snipe the guard in the tower, then crouch by the nearest crates. When the coast is clear, run round and get behind the tents. Make your way to the back of the light-coloured one and creep inside. Grab the documents to the right. Move further in and plant the Mic on the desk, then cower in the outer part of the tent. Return to the inner part after the conversation and grab the card from the desk. Snipe both sentry guards outside the tent, then machine gun the two to the right and kill the guard near the large building. Use the pass to get inside.

Wait by the door in the next area. When the soldiers move off, open it. Snipe the man going towards the hut first, then kill the tower guard. Equip the machine gun and gun down the remaining guards before the alarm is raised. There will be two more at the back of the hangar. Pick the lock and go inside. Plant the bomb on the marker.

You can alert the guards but just be sure to kill them before they set off the alarm switch

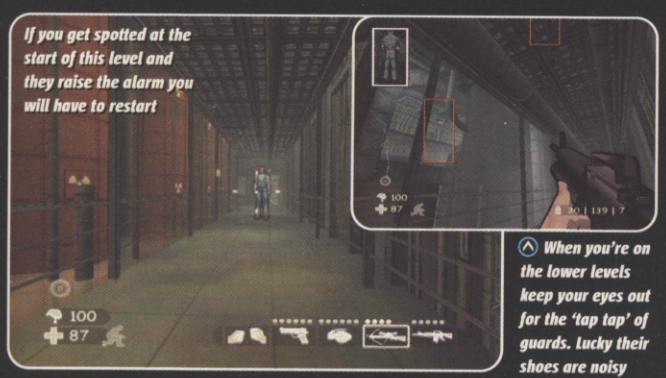
In areas where there are lots of guards, take out the tower guy first then pick off the others

4 SUBMARINE 1

Climb down the ladder and open the nearest door. Stay low and move along the walkway when the guard above walks away from you.

Go through the next couple of doors and silently kill the man with his back to you. When the captain goes through the door you can shoot the guard on the walkway above through the corner. Follow the walkway. In the next open room wait for the guard on the far side to walk away then silently move along until you are by the pipe.

Wait for the patrolling guard to be facing the wrong way then open the far door. Climb the ladder and open the door. When the opposite patrol guard is facing away sneak behind the closest sailor and knock him out. Go through the next three doors to the radio room. After a cutscene use the radio, then open the near door. Kill the next sailor and head into the officers' cabin. Shut the door, open the curtain and get in the shower.



If you get spotted at the start of this level and they raise the alarm you will have to restart

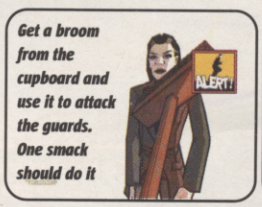
When you're on the lower levels keep your eyes out for the 'tap tap' of guards. Lucky their shoes are noisy

5 BRISTOL SUITES HOTEL

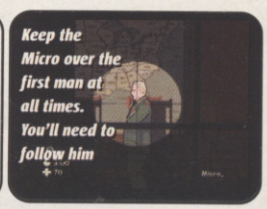
Get a broom from the cupboard and whack the lady in the corridor then dump her body in the cupboard. Get another broom from the second cupboard and use it on the guard in the laundry room.

Wait until you hear footsteps outside then go out and bash them over the head. Hide the bodies and go through the door in the laundry room. Shoot the guard then search the lockers for Documents and ammo. Get the key from the next room and go through to the red corridor. Gun down the guard in the next room and dump his body in the bedroom (get health from the red chair). Unlock the door on the left in the second corridor. Get health from the bed. Open the windows then use the Micro and target the man in the room opposite. When he walks across follow him. When you can no longer see him, track back towards where he started and he'll reappear. Keep following him around the room. Afterwards head out and into the door that opens. Open the high locker and pull the lever. Go out and turn left.

Shoot the man that comes through the door not the one behind him. Follow the FBI agent to the billiards room. When the FBI agent stops moving, go back to the previous room and enter the lift shaft. Climb up and follow the vent. Smash the glass and drop into the next room. Shoot both men inside and get their items. Unlock the door to let the FBI in. When the second one gets shot, follow Willard to the meeting room and kill him.



Get a broom from the cupboard and use it to attack the guards. One smack should do it

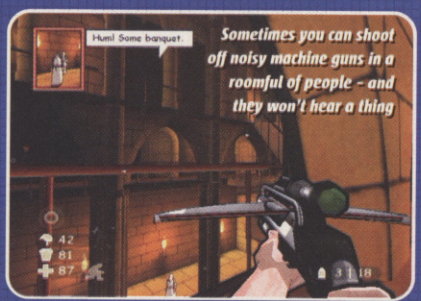


Keep the Micro over the first man at all times. You'll need to follow him

6 SANCTUARY HALL

Wait for the conversation to finish. Once you hear the door shut burst in and gun down both guards. Pass through the next corridor and snipe the guard from close range. Enter the grand hall but stay low. Wait for the conversation below to finish. Wait by the door until a guard appears from a door further to the right.

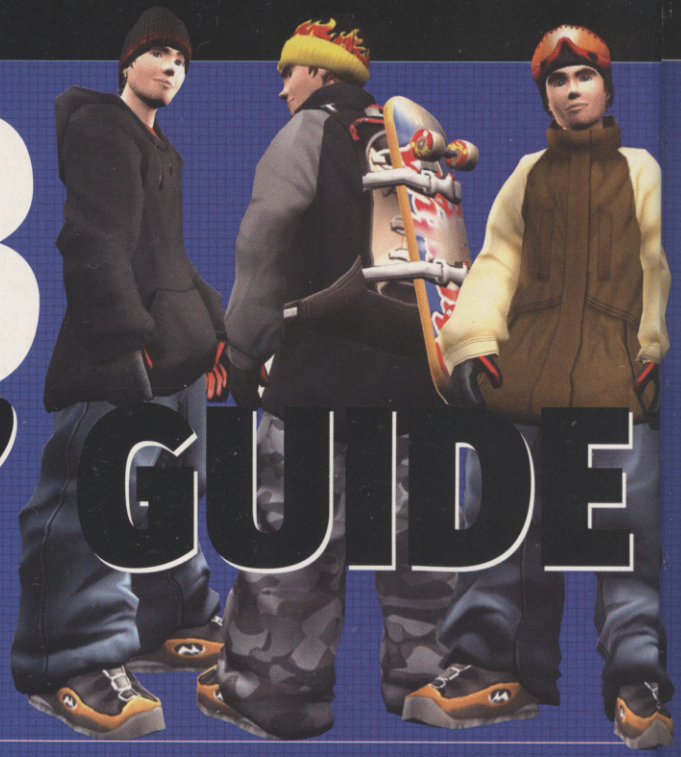
Nail him with the crossbow, then snipe the patrolling guard in the opposite balcony above. Run and crouch by his body and face left. A women will come through a door on the right. Shoot her as soon as she does, then enter the door she came from. Snipe the man at the bottom of the stairs and collect a key from his body. Go through the nearest door and head up to the opposite balcony. Unlock the gate at the far end with the key. Get a pass card from a drawer inside and go back across and use this to open the double doors. In the next room lob a grenade then rush the guards. Go through the door in the corner and push the odd coloured stones to get a Part of Statue and documents. Rush back and gun down both female guards. Insert the Part of Statue into the front of the statue and go down the stairs open in the corner.



Sometimes you can shoot off noisy machine guns in a roomful of people – and they won't hear a thing

The crossbow is an excellent weapon but the bolts are slightly slower than bullets so aim ahead if sniping a moving target

SSX 3 PLAYERS' GUIDE



What's this? There's a huge new mountain to conquer! Barny Zoeller gives you a crash course on finishing the racing sections in style

1 PEAK 1

SNOW JAM

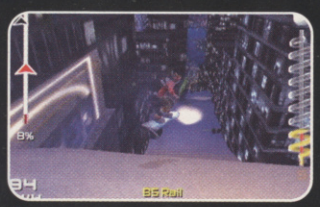
Steer to the left after the second jump. Just before a Trick Boost bonus there's a rail. Grind along and boost. You should fly along and come off where it turns right. If you're fast you'll shoot over the next hill and land on the course in first place.

After jumping the first chasm look for a rail on the right. Hit this at speed and you can grind along and over the spectator box. This is quite hard but if you miss or come off early you can glide under the spectators to take a shortcut.

Look for a rail on the right in the forest section. Grind along and boost towards the end to make a mighty jump across into a hollow log. Once through the log there is a Speed Boost followed by some easy rails. Leap off the end of the rails into midair for a perfect trick opportunity.

METRO CITY

The first shortcut is straight ahead at the bottom of the starting slope. Grind on the rail that goes through the 'out of bounds' sign. Follow the path down the steep slope. At the bottom is a tiny ramp you can use to jump over a building. The straight path continues after this. When it rejoins the main course you'll be so far ahead you could walk and still win.



The best shortcut to be had is on the right shortly after the police car. Look for a smashable glass 'out of bounds' sign. This takes you to an easy downhill section that completely bypasses the tricky split-path route. You get a clear run that gives you a big lead – miles in front of the other competitors.

At the bottom of the slope after jumping over the train tracks there is a rail on the left. If you manage to grind along this you will bypass two turns – great for when you need to catch up. This leads on to a series of other rails that you grind almost to the end of the course.

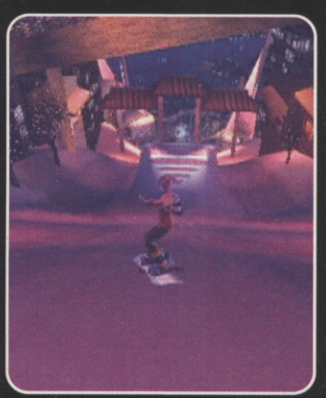
HAPPINESS RACE

This race is fairly easy. All you need to do is knock your rival off at the start, then head straight down the middle using your boost to build a decent lead. Your next cue is when the plane flies overhead. Look around for a grind-able log on the right, then head in that direction for a fast downhill shortcut.

Look for a money bonus on the right as you're chased by the avalanche (you may miss this route completely unless you stick to the right). Jump off the ledge at this point and with enough speed you'll fly down to the path below. This will both save time and mean you can stop worrying about the avalanche behind you.

PEAK 1 RACE

You need to race through the last few courses all the way to the bottom of the mountain. Follow the same route in the first section as you did for the last race. At the end there will be a short slow section connecting the last bit to the Snow Jam course. Use any boost power to get through this as quickly as possible.



The last two parts to Peak 1 are Metro City and Snow Jam. You should follow similar routes to the ones you used to race through these sections earlier. If you think you're running short on time then push up. This will point the nose of your board down when you're in midair and save a bit of time.

2 PEAK 2

RUTHLESS RIDGE

There's a large ramp when you go under the airship. Head off this pointing your board to the right. This leads to a short alternative route with much easier terrain. You'll cross over the main track at a blue ramp, but keep following it and you'll come across a high jump.

Shortly after the above alternative route there is a hard-to-see ramp on the right. If you manage to hit this at full speed then you can launch yourself onto the cliff top above. It's a very hard jump, but if you make it to the top there's a low rail to grind that leads into a cave shortcut.

Look for a rail on the left shortly after the series of jumps when you leave the cave with falling pillars. Grind along the rail into an 'out of bounds' sign. This will take you behind the spectator boxes and even bypass a few corners if you follow the right side.

RUTHLESS RACE

Knock your rival over at the start (just punch in both directions and with a bit of luck you should smack him off). Stick to the right side of the area and you should be on a long straight path. Point to the left on the jump at the end, as the blizzard tends to blow you right into a rock wall.

Look for a money bonus shortly after the area where you jump over the waterfall streams three times. If you hit the ramp by the bonus correctly it will send you over some difficult terrain, and land you on a nice easy path to the bottom. Keep your speed up and you should make it to the bottom first.

INTIMIDATOR

This course is full of large difficult jumps. The first one has a rail to grind over, then a tricky jump. You'll need to let go of a jump at the right moment and be boosting to make it. Don't worry if you mess up as the NPCs rarely manage to get over it either.

There aren't many shortcuts but there are plenty of rails to grind. If you hit one at a decent speed then start boosting and you'll be able to speed ahead of the other players. You only need to guide yourself along rails gently to avoid coming off.

After the Chinese bridge look for a green ramp on the right – it's fairly easy to hit. Even at medium speed you should still be able to make it over the wall, completely bypassing the light corner to the left. Follow the route from here for a series of trick-happy jumps.

PEAK 2 RACE

The first section of this timed run is Ruthless Race. Follow exactly the same course as before. If you wipe out a lot at the start, restart the course. Boost through the joining section at the bottom that leads to Intimidator. Remember to save boost for the hard jumps and take the usual shortcuts.

3 PEAK 3

GRAVITUDE

This course has multiple ramps for jumping. When you see three ramps next to each other, choose the one on the right as this is the shortest jump. The others will get you more air and raise your trick bar, but performing stunts won't win you the race.

At the second set of triple jumps choose the one in the middle. This will lead to a low path with almost no obstacles, then an ice tunnel. After this there are a couple of easy jumps. Look for broken trees on the right of one and go off the side to another low path shortcut.

THE THRONE RACE

This is hard. Don't waste even a second doing massive jumps as your rival will speed by underneath you while you're showing off in midair. If you do go over a ridge, push up. You will land quicker and straighter without losing any speed.

It's vital to get an early lead. If your opponent is ahead at the ice cave, just restart. If you can knock him off his board near the beginning and then make the rest of the course without falling you stand a good chance of winning.

There aren't many shortcuts. After the ice cave there's a ledge you must slide along. When you land your rival will head right. There's another path on the left. Follow this all the way. It won't count for much time but it's easier than the normal way.

ALL PEAK RACE

You need to reach the bottom before the 30-minute time limit runs out. If the time runs out when you see the finish line you have to start from the beginning (so that's another half hour again). The time limit is not too strict, but restart if you make any big mistakes early on.

The first section is the same as the last race. As you don't need to beat any rivals you can start jumping off ridges and doing tricks – a few milliseconds spent doing this shouldn't affect your overall time. Make sure you take the straightest route and don't fall off the side at any point.

When you reach the area before the ice cave aim for the cannon. Grind along it and boost to get catapulted high into the air. Trick all the way down. Once inside the ice cave boost jump towards the money bonus on the high ledge in the middle. This leads to another jump with a bonus in midair.

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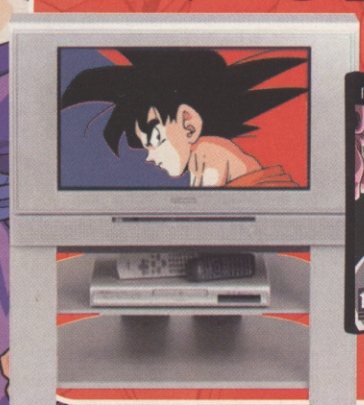

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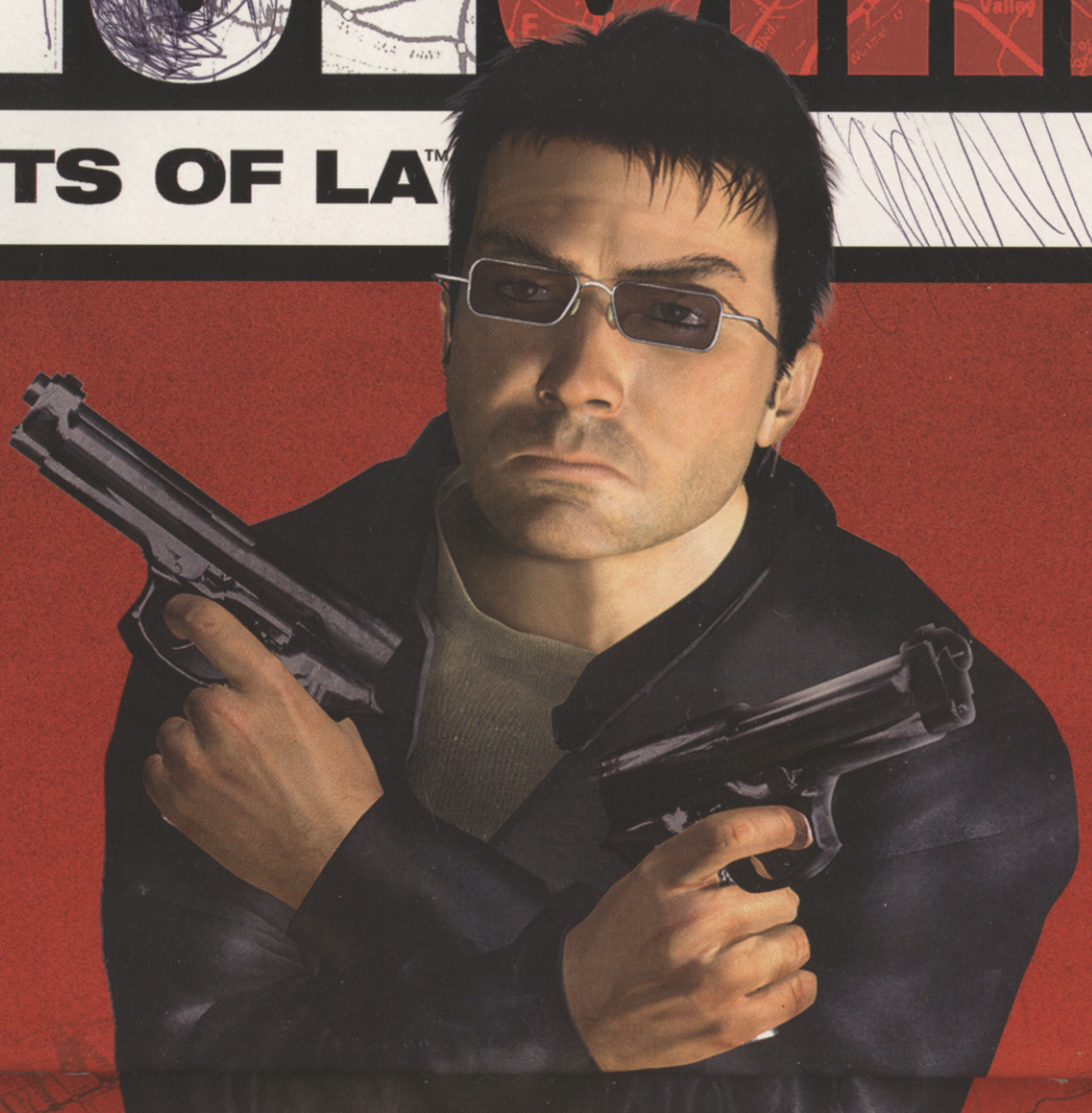

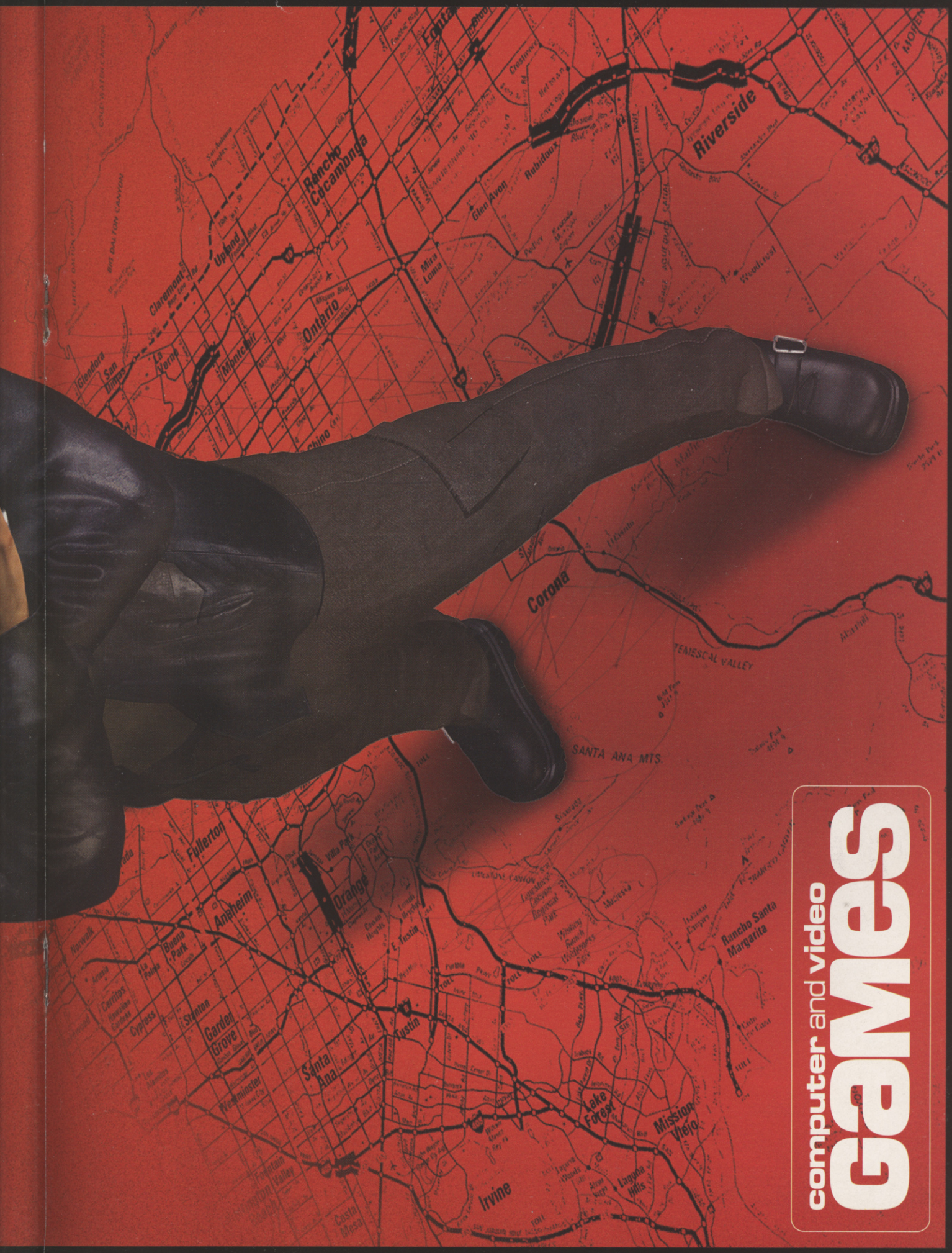
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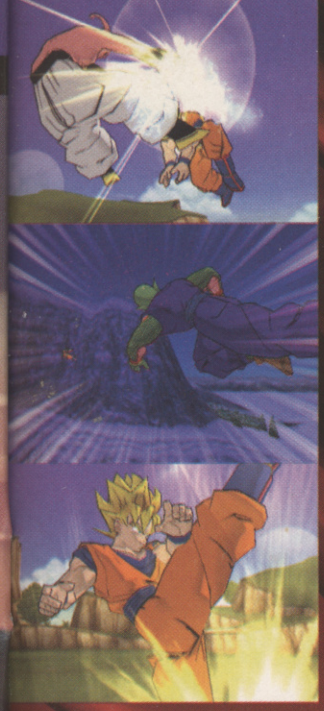

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PlayStation.2

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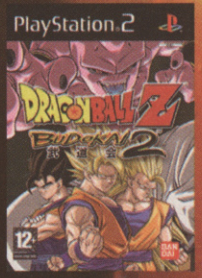
DRAGONBALL Z BUDOKAI 2 武道会



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Graeme 'Boyd'
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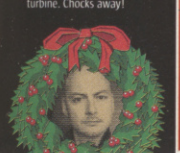
Graeme must have had help from the elves this month, he's been so busy. If you don't get any gifts, you know why – he's stolen Santa's entire staff!

Maura Sutton
PAPER HAT MAKER

Swapping the mean streets of London for the golden highways of Hollywood in True Crime, Maura now eats macrobiotic and will only talk to us through her PA.

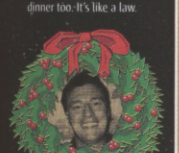
Ellie Gibson
TREE DRESSER

Mastering both road and sky in PGR2 and Crimson Skies, Ellie is the one to ask for help with your engine, whether it's combustion or turbine. Chocks away!



Rich Marsh
BAUBLE POLISHER

Rich reviewed our most Christmassy game this month, Amped 2 (it's got snow, yeah?), so he's in charge of doing us Xmas dinner too. It's like a law.



Paul Anglin
SNOWMAN BUILDER

There should be a government warning about the dangers of confusing dragonballs with snowballs, as Paul found out the painful way this month.

BUMPER CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

SANTA'S GOT NO EXCUSE THIS YEAR

There are so many console bundles and games collections around this Xmas you can blag yourself gaming booty galore, if you're smart about it. We've carved up and served not just this month's releases, but also the best bundles and special offers in stores for Xmas, and left the chewed up carcass and little gristly bits of cartilage all over the dinner table to help you (and Santa) make the best buying decisions this year. You'll never be lumped with socks and pants again!

LEE
Lee Skittrell
Games Editor

THIS MONTH

72 Tony Hawk's Underground .....PS2, XBOX, GC
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92 Grabbed By The Ghoulies .....XBOX
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112 Need For Speed Underground ....PS2, XBOX, GC, PC
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118 SWAT: Global Strike Team .....PS2, XBOX, PC
120 Reviews round-up including Arx Fatalis; Commandos 3: Destination Berlin; Pop Idol; Dynasty Warriors 4; Dynasty Tactics 2; Korea: Forgotten Conflict; Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes; Time Crisis 3; Dragon Ball Z Budokai; NHL Hitz Pro; Crash Nitro Kart; Ford Racing 2; Gladius; Secret Weapons Over Normandy; The Hobbit; Bombastic; Silent Hill 3; Dark Fall: The Journal

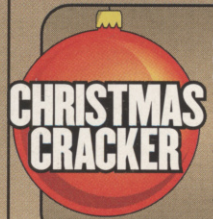
WHAT THE SCORES MEAN

CVG takes the month's games and rips them apart, knuckle to knuckle. And this is how our oh-so-technical scores system breaks down. Pay close attention, please...

1	WHY, GOD, WHY?	6	FAIRLY SOLID BUT NOWT SPECIAL
2	STINKS. NEVER PLAY THIS	7	TASTY
3	A WASTE OF YOUR MONEY	8	QUALITY GAME. CONSIDER BUYING IT
4	MAYBE RENT, NEVER BUY	9	CLASS ON A DISC
5	VERY AVERAGE	10	AN ABSOLUTE MUST THAT DEFINES THE GENRE

CVG AWARDS SYSTEM

These accolades don't get dished out just because a game gets a certain score. They're CVG's way of telling you which are our pet hates and personal favourites.



CVG'S CHRISTMAS CRACKER!
Only one game is awarded CVG's most coveted prize, and it is... Well, you'll just have to turn the page and find out, won't you!

XMAS ESSENTIAL
A damn good game. It may not break the mould, but it's a cut above the rest

CVG CHRISTMAS TURKEY
More abominable than a Yeti

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

GAME INFO

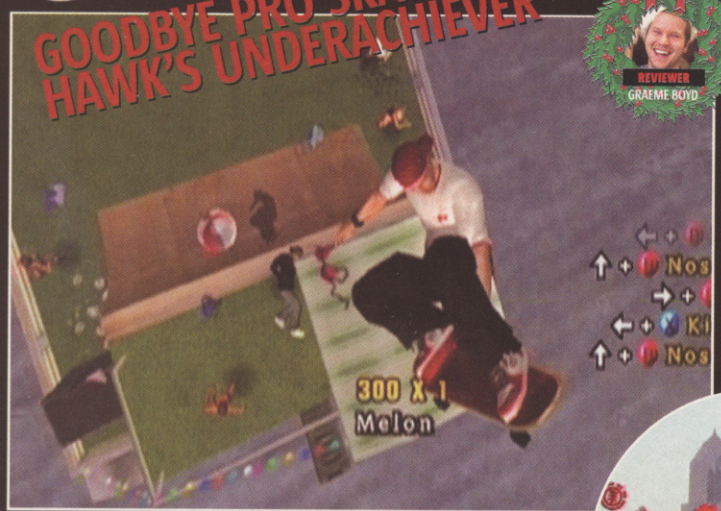
OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4

PUB: ACTIVISION DEV: NEVERSOFT
WWW.ACTIVISION.CO.UK

REVIEWED ON: PS2

ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX, CUBE

GOODBYE PRO SKATER, HELLO TONY HAWK'S UNDERACHIEVER



Show off your flyest moves to the girls at the Wet Beaver Boat Party

Back in the 1970s, a bunch of skateboarders from LA drained a swimming pool. Rolling down the smooth sides and jumping above the lip, they instantly invented vert. It was a revolution.

Which is exactly what we wanted from THUG. Gone is the Pro Skater tag, replaced by a gritty new storyline charting your ascent into the stratosphere of skating stardom. It should be a huge ollie forward for the series.

BAILING OUT

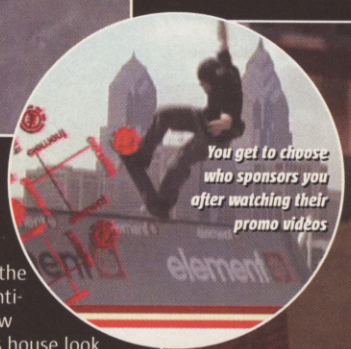
It's not. Apart from the storyline and the cool customisation options, very little has changed from Tony Hawk's 4. The stages are still enclosed areas peppered with people who'll give you a challenge to complete.

And while it's cool competing in tournaments and attracting sponsors, it's not cool taking hot nuts to security guards or collecting donuts, but you find yourself doing dumb stuff like that more often. We won't ruin the culmination of the story, but it's such an anti-climax that it makes New Year's Eve at your gran's house look like the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

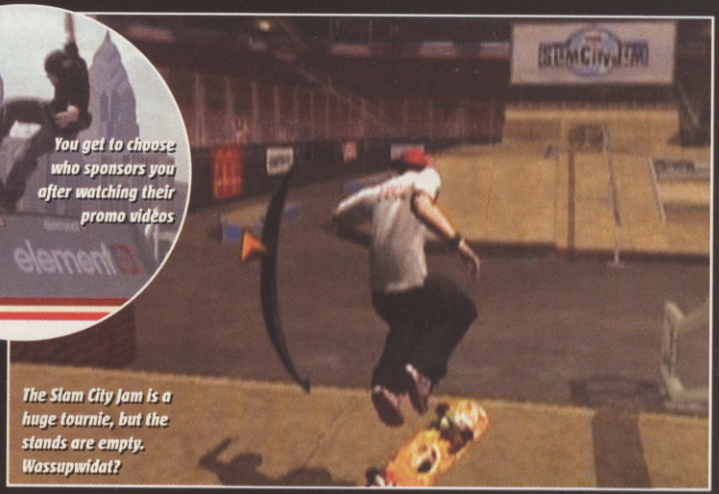
But the cars are cool, right? Nope. They add nothing to the game and the missions they appear in are an infuriating interruption rather than a pleasant break – like a Jehovah's Witness banging on your door when you're enjoying your favourite movie.

GETTING SKATEBORED?

So, the first Tony Hawk's game to score badly? See, that's where things get complicated. The other new major addition to the formula, the on-foot stuff, is pretty sweet. With a button press you can leap off your board, scarper over to another rail or clamber up onto a building to find a new line and resume your combo. It opens up new opportunities to rack up amazing



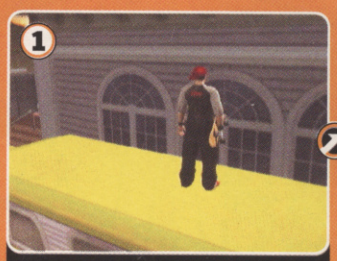
You get to choose who sponsors you after watching their promo videos



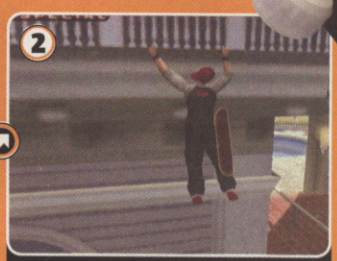
The Slam City Jam is a huge tournie, but the stands are empty. Wassupwidat?

CLIMBING THE WALLS

Reaching the highest parts of the level used to be a privilege reserved for the dopest Tony Hawk's players. Now anyone can do it – just climb!

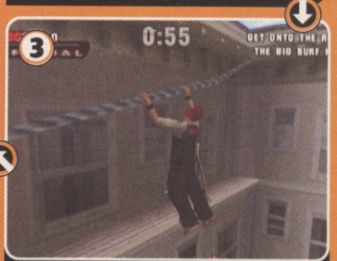


You can clamber up onto just about anything. Use this bus for a hefty-up



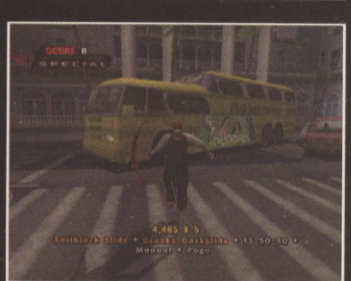
Do the ten-finger shuffle along the balconies, keeping an eye out for sweet lines

The view from the roof is awesome, and wait until you see the trick potential...



Wires are handy – you can grab hold of one midair to continue your combo

The acid drop is another dope new move – use it to drop onto ramps from above



Busy traffic means the end of your phat combo. Jump off and get outta the way!

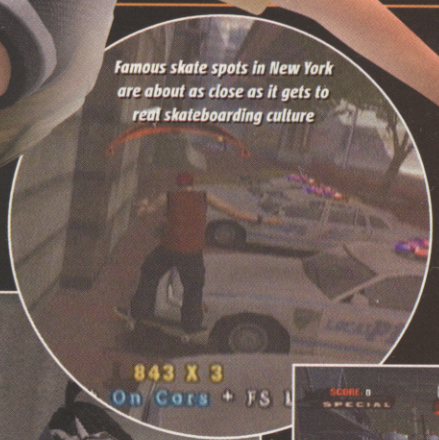
GOING UNDERGROUND

We had such high hopes for THUG. We wanted the chance to prove ourselves in the hottest skate spots, huge free-roaming environments, and the chance to build your own skateboarding empire with clothing, boards, shoes and games with your name on them. We got...

An ascent to stardom that sees you thumping Tony Hawk on the third level...

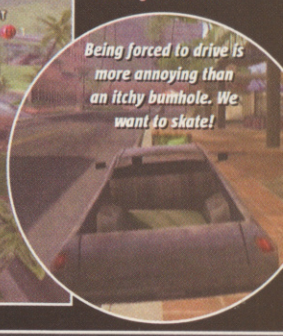
Cars that handle like something out of Looney Tunes and bloody leaf-blowers!

Your glamorous career takes you right back to the stinking dump-hole you started in



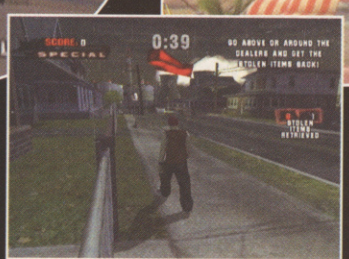
Famous skate spots in New York are about as close as it gets to real skateboarding culture

Ultra-awesome high altitude stunts like this make all that climbing worthwhile

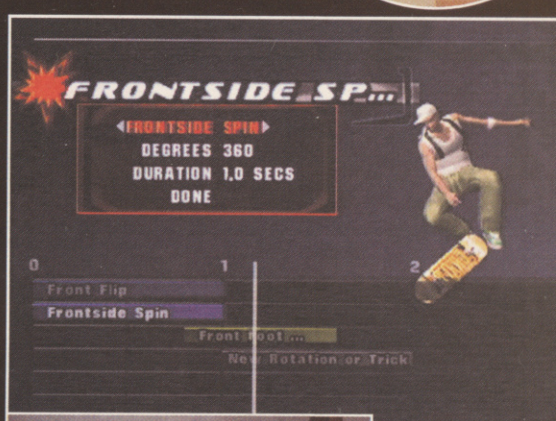


Being forced to drive is more annoying than an itchy bumhole. We want to skate!

Rock and roll mentalist Gene Simmons makes a guest appearance. Check out the tongue!



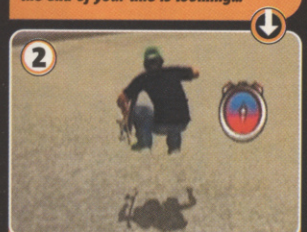
Another unwelcome addition is dumbass stealth missions. What's the point?



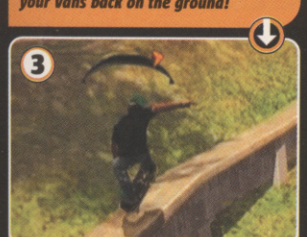
MAN OVERBOARD

New off-the-board action is another way to link your combos together and opens up a whole new world of sick scores.

You're laying down some ill points but the end of your line is looming...



Just ollie into the air, jump off and get your Vans back on the ground!

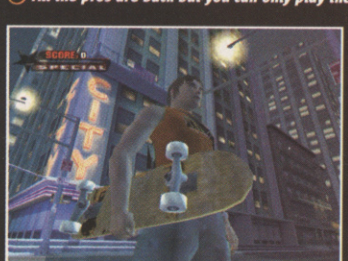


Bust a move to the nearest rail and caveman into a grind...

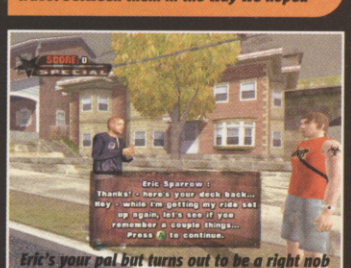
All the pros are back but you can only play them in Free Skate mode

Getting to create your own trick is a cool touch. Fun too!

The face mapping stuff is the best new addition. Sweet!



The big levels are well designed but you can't travel between them in the way we hoped



Eric's your pal but turns out to be a right nob

scores, but purists will be angry at the way it lets you easily access the toughest parts of the level.

The levels, however, are bigger and better, both in terms of area coverage and sheer vertical height. Some of the building-to-building transfers on offer could pucker nutsacks at 50 paces and with the new moves, no part of the stage is immune from your tricking talents.

THUG LOVIN'

Most importantly of all, it's still fantastic fun to play. We're not saying it's realistic, but when you're mid-combo, with fingers twitching across the pad like catatonic gerbils, it's like being in a whole other zone of coolness. Who needs realism?

In a way we admire what Neversoft has done. Problem is, THUG never quite decides whether it wants to accurately reflect underground skateboarding or be a fun, Jackass-style muckabout. It ends up looking a bit dumb, like someone's dad buying a leather jacket and listening to The Darkness – he thinks he's cool, but everyone else thinks he's a nob.

Ultimately THUG is a collection of missed opportunities and unfulfilled ideas obscuring a fantastic game. Going Underground should have been much cooler than this, but hell, we're buying a ticket anyway.

computer and video games VERDICT

Poor execution of cool ideas and a disappointingly dumb storyline saved by some sweet new stuff. Like a stunning girl with acne – flawed, but definitely still worth a long, hard look. **Graeme**

- ✚ Sublime skating engine
- ✚ Massive new stages to grind apart
- ✚ Lots to learn and unlock
- ➖ Daft storyline struggling to be cool
- ➖ Promised revolution has failed to deliver
- ➖ So many missed opportunities!

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... ■ SSX 3 (PS2, XB, GC) ■ Tony Hawk's 4 (PS2, XB, GC)

TIME FOR ACTION

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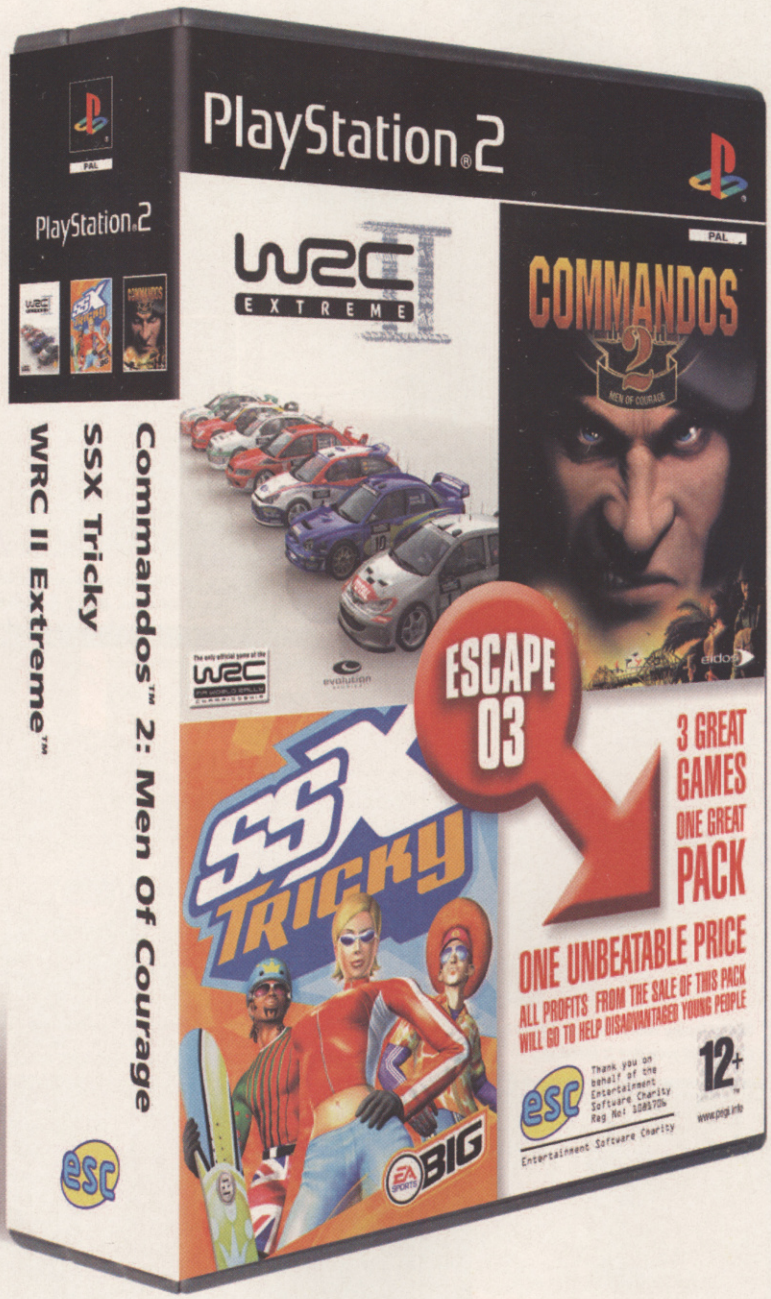

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DVD ROM PlayStation.2

12+ www.pegi.info

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EYE TOY Groove

They say good dancers make good lovers. We feel very sorry for Mike's missus...

Tacky effects engulf your image when you freestyle

This mini-game tests your ability to remember a sequence of moves

There are only a handful of dance techniques to learn, so you can focus on keeping the beat

Unable to shake his moneymaker, Graeme must channel his moves to the on-screen icons

Mike, also, finds it difficult not to move his ass. Both must learn the way of Groove...

BUILD-A-BOOGIE

One of the best bits about Groove is that you can create your own dance routines and play them back in single and multiplayer games.

When the music starts pumping lash out your arms to the beats. Your movements will be recorded and translated into icons that flash up when you re-dance your custom routine.

Mike and Graeme carefully crafted the most intricate piece of dance choreography ever...

...only to look like a pair of uncoordinated morons when attempting to repeat their madcap moves to the sweet sounds of the Cheeky Girls

GAME INFO

OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-2

ONLINE GAMING

PUB: SONY DEV: SONY
WWW.EYETOY.COM

REVIEWED ON PS2

BIG FISH, LITTLE FISH, DANCING IN A CARDBOARD BOX

You know the feeling. You're sardined on a packed dancefloor, elbows pinned to your side and the most impressive move you can pull off is a finger poke towards the ceiling. Welcome to the world of EyeToy dancing.

GET INTO THE GROOVE, BUT DON'T MOVE!

Sony's set-top Cyclops confines you to a very limited amount of space. If your head and torso shift slightly out of the frame you'll screw up. Bopping on the spot will result in you accidentally triggering an icon at the wrong time. This can prove troublesome if, like us, you're prone to spontaneous outbursts of freeform dance.

The lack of freedom will no doubt frustrate fans of flamboyant dance mat rhythm action games. But if you had fun with EyeToy: Play you'll be used to the set-up and should get some party pleasures from Groove's many modes.

GRIN WHEN YOU'RE WINNING

The way it works is dead simple. Little faces pulse out from the centre of the screen, and you've got to hit them the moment they pass over the icons that surround you. Get your timing just right and the icon will pull a daft grin, but miss it and you'll have a grumpy bugger on your hands. Too many miserable sods and it's all over.

You're not just limited to prod-and-point manoeuvres, though. Groovers are called upon to perform funky waving motions, Saturday Night Fever-style poses and freestyle jives.

It's impossible not to look like a total dork but that's what it's all about, because making a fool of yourself with your mates in the multiplayer options is where the most fun is to be had. Playing solo is a no-no. There are stacks of wicked mini dance-offs. Some force two of you to squeeze into the same frame at once, while others see you alternately leaping into the spotlight to perform quirky dance challenges.

Problem is you can't help but feel short-changed despite all the fun that the multiplayer shenanigans supply, because EyeToy: Play boasted 12 games and came bundled with the camera. Like Play, Groove costs 40 quid, but features only 26 songs and comes bundled with absolutely nothing! Hardly the sort of deal that'll have you dancing on the ceiling. CVG

When the star icons appear you know you've got to nail a dandy wave manoeuvre

Strike poses at certain points. Complete the stage and you can save these photos

Computer and Video Games VERDICT

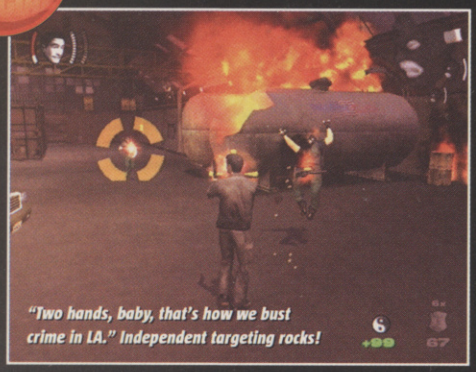
EyeToy's dancefloor diva disappoints with its claustrophobic gameplay and limited track list. It's fun for a while, but the lack of variety means that the novelty soon wears off. **Mike**

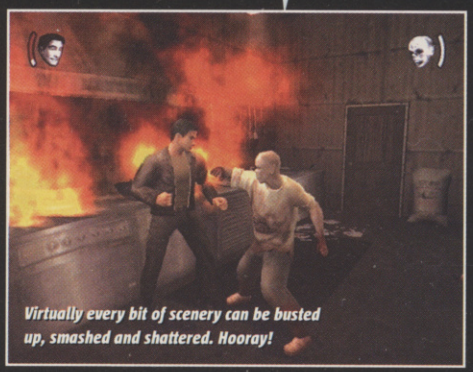
- Seeing how crap a dancer you really are
- Quirky multiplayer dance-offs
- Great with a bunch of mates

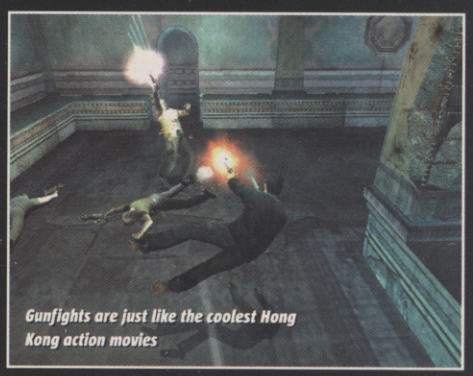
- You've got to stay rooted to the spot
- Little single-player appeal
- Poor value for money

6 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Dance Dance Revolution DDRMAX (PS2)


"Two hands, baby, that's how we bust crime in LA." Independent targeting rocks!

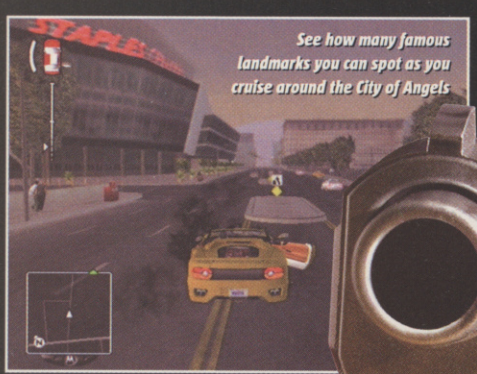

Virtually every bit of scenery can be busted up, smashed and shattered. Hooray!

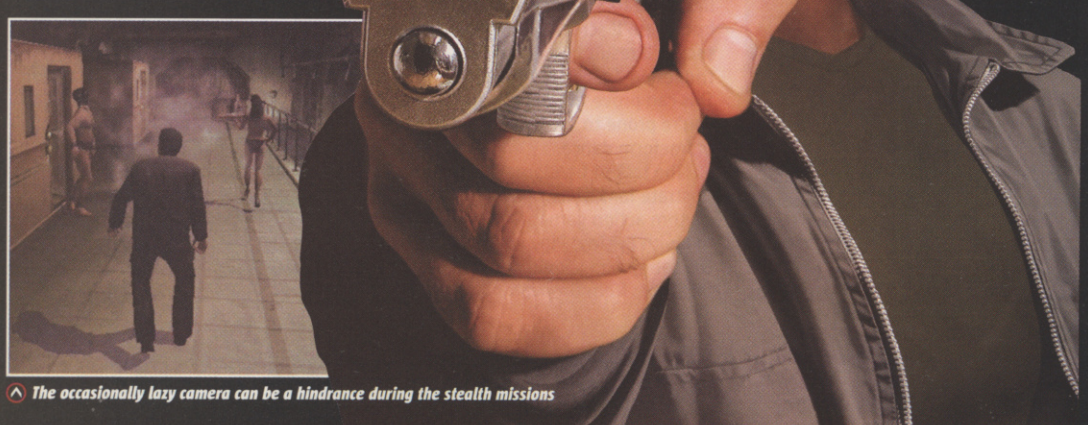

Gunfights are just like the coolest Hong Kong action movies

TRUE CRIME

STREETS OF LA™

The cutscenes will chan... according to how ... play the ga...


See how many famous landmarks you can spot as you cruise around the City of Angels


The occasionally lazy camera can be a hindrance during the stealth missions

TAKE OUT THE TRASH AND GET YOUR ROCKS OFF IN THE CRIME-RIDDEN STREETS OF LOS ANGELES

NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1

ONLINE GAMING

PUB: ACTIVISION DEV: LUXOFLUX
WWW.TRUECRIMELA.COM

REVIEWED ON: PS2

ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX GC

So this is what they mean by seamless. Tyres squealing, sirens wailing, you're hot on the tail of a car-jacking scumbag. You tear up street after street of authentically mapped LA without the slightest hint of a loading screen. As the hip-hop soundtrack booms in your ears, you draw your weapon and let rip with both barrels, locked in a high-octane dance of death.

Suddenly, the perp jumps out and makes a run for it. You leap out of the car and chase him on foot, finally taking him down with a flying tackle. The action then instantly switches to hand-to-hand combat as you and the low-life exchange blows.

Anything goes, including roundhouse kicks, brutal ground stomps and finishing moves. Just like a full-scale beat 'em up, in fact. Finally, when you've beaten the gang-banger senseless, slap the cuffs on him and rack up the reward points.

LA STORY

True Crime's branching storyline is directly affected by your approach to playing the game. As Elite Operations Division officer Nick Kang, charged with sorting out the warring gang factions that blight LA, you can be as ruthless or angelic as you like.

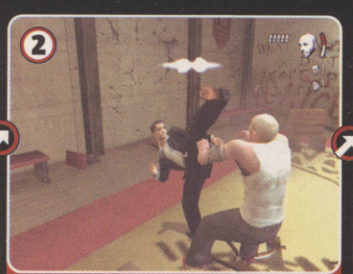
Unlike GTA, however, your actions have consequences. The good cop/bad cop rating system means that if you take the heavy-handed approach and cap pickpockets in the head rather

FU FIGHTERS

The True Crime combat engine is sophisticated and versatile. Unlock special moves in the Dojos run by Nick's brother, Cary, or in the Bonus Mission Combat Dojos.

With your cool moves you can split the wig of anyone who bugs you. Strut your martial arts stuff to scrap perps in the streets, or during set-piece extravaganzas – a bit like the huge brawls in Shenmue.

Once your opponent is stunned you can unleash spectacular combos



Hong Kong action fans will recognise the Jackie Chan and Jet Li-influenced moves

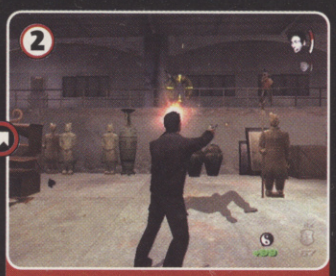
During fights, onlookers crowd round and shout encouragement, some of it hilarious

THIS IS MY BOOMSTICK!

The extraordinary gunplay in True Crime is worthy of a standalone shoot 'em up, and far surpasses the shooting engine in GTA.

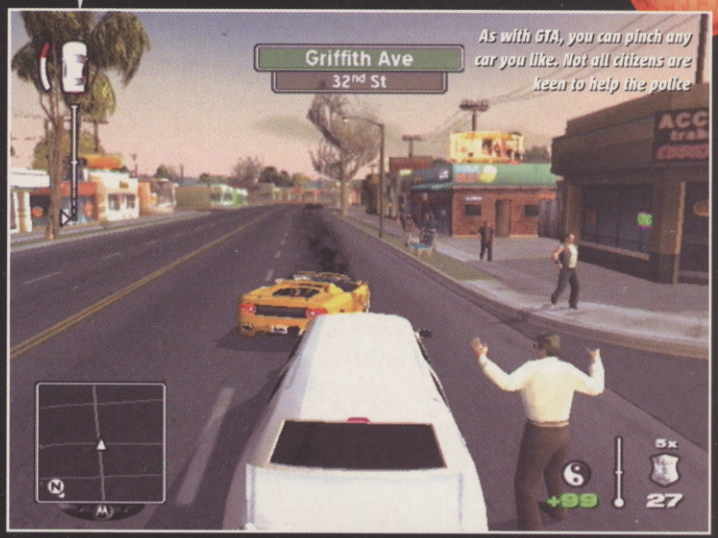
Whether you're unlocking new skills at the 24/7 Firing Range, precision targeting tyres from behind your steering wheel, or letting rip in a full-on bloodbath, it's all so effortless.

Unlock upgrades at the 24/7 Target Range. Watch out, those dummies are crafty

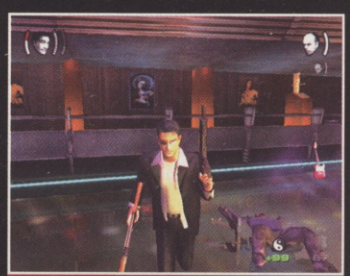


"You've got a shotgun? I've got two, and they target independently. Suck on that!"

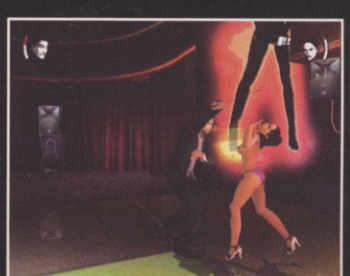
The Precision Targeting upgrade takes some getting used to, particularly when driving



As with GTA, you can pinch any car you like. Not all citizens are keen to help the police



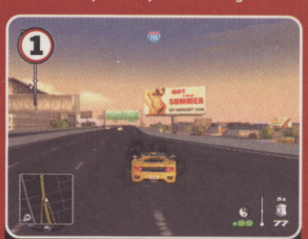
Nick is the ultimate anti-hero: handsome, ruthless and ready with a cheeky pun...



In True Crime, you get to fight S&M strippers with their own whips. Need we say more?

THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS

When we played a very early version of True Crime, the car handling was like trying to juggle jelly while balancing on a sack full of mice. Thankfully that's all been taken care of, and the controls now seem to be pitched just about right.



During Bonus Missions, unlock flash new wheels by winning street races

Escaping from armed gangsters is one of the toughest tasks in the game

At the 24/7 driving courses learn new skills such as the rapid stop

than arrest them, your bad cop rating soars. Mow down too many innocents and you'll eventually set off a state of civil unrest. Bad Nick route also gives you an entirely different storyline.

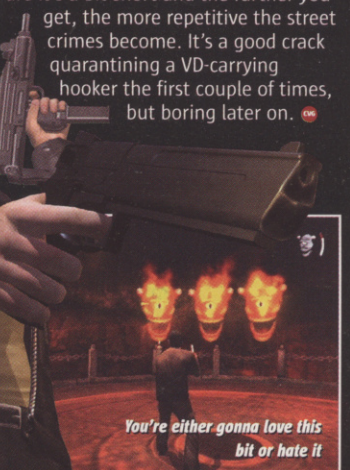
You have the freedom to foul up as often as you like. Fail to complete a mission and you can choose to move straight on to the next, with the understanding that you may not see the best ending to the game. You can also go back to any previous mission and try to unlock more upgrades that might help with the mission that you're stuck on. Complete all the missions in an episode and you'll be rewarded with a Bonus Cruisin' interlude,with the chance to upgrade your car, weapons or fighting moves.

THREE TIMES THE FUN

The cinematic cutscenes, top Hollywood voice talent (Christopher Walken, Gary Oldman, Michael Madsen) and a multi-layered storyline reflect the tension, drama and excitement of the real-life streets of LA. However, the thrill of driving around a real city can soon wear thin if the gameplay isn't up to scratch (The Getaway, anyone?).

True Crime's triple threat approach is ambitious, but the action is superbly balanced, with the driving, fighting and shooting all working well. The shock plot twist at the end won't please all, but the biggest criticisms are it's a bit short and the further you get, the more repetitive the street crimes become. It's a good crack quarantining a VD-carrying hooker the first couple of times, but boring later on. CVG

One of the game's flaws: cuffing a perp is a laugh at first but can get repetitive



You're either gonna love this bit or hate it

computer and video games VERDICT

You'll have a complete blast playing True Crime. It may not be as innovative as GTA, but it has the same streak of anarchic humour and you'll be gripped by the branching plot. **Maura**

- LA depicted in amazing detail
- Fight sequences worthy of the best movies
- Plenty of GTA-style humour
- Soundtrack is less varied than Vice City
- Identical people and vehicles
- Too short

8 OUT OF TEN

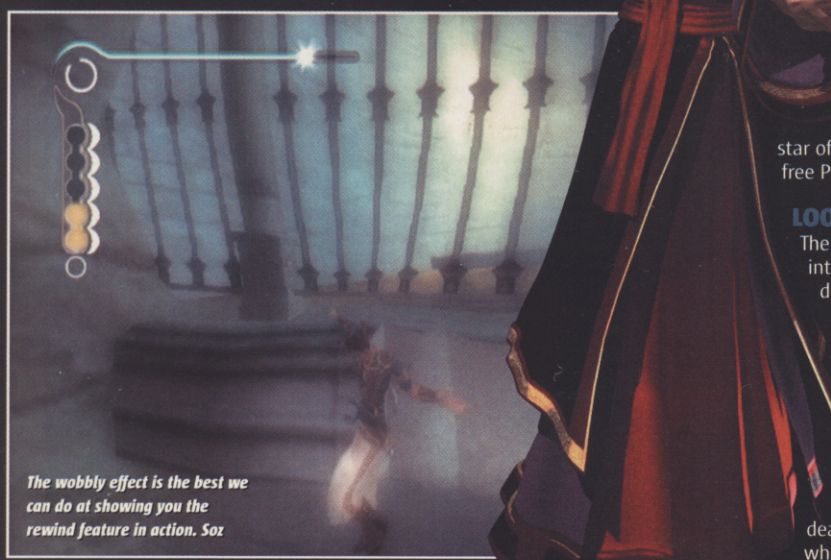
IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... GTA: Vice City (PS2, PC) Dead To Rights (XB)

PRINCE OF PERSIA
THE SANDS OF TIME™

CHRISTMAS CRACKER

REVIEWER
LEE SKITTRELL

Access points to this magical realm are hidden everywhere. Find them for a health boost



The wobbly effect is the best we can do at showing you the rewind feature in action. Soz

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: UBI SOFT DEV: UBI SOFT
HTTP://PRINCE-OF-PERSIA.COM
REVIEWED ON: PS2
ALSO AVAILABLE: PC GBA

BEAT YOUR ENEMIES TO A BLOODY PULP, THEN REWIND AND DO IT AGAIN!

There are some pretty terrible tricks you can play on people. A favourite round our way is hiding a freshly made batch of dog poop with scraps of paper, setting it alight in a neighbour's yard then laughing like a drain as they stamp out the fire while getting flambéed dog egg all over their slippers.

Wretched as such pranks are, they're nothing compared to the horror of being an unwitting pawn in a lunatic Maharaja's game, like the star of the guaranteed dog-egg free Prince Of Persia.

LOON PANTS ARMY

The Prince has been tricked into unleashing the ancient demonic force The Sands Of Time, transforming almost every living thing into hideous sand demons, and turning his homeland into a sand-blasted hell hole into the bargain.

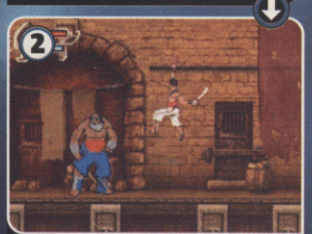
It's up to you and Farah, the only other unchanged human being, to escape the deathtrap palace and find out who – or what – is behind the worst practical joke in the whole of Persian history.

POCKET TIME MACHINE

While GameCube and Xbox-owning wannabe Princes will have to wait until next year to get POP, GBA players can get a taste of the action from day one.

Viewed from the side, the game has a lot more in common with the original Prince Of Persia games but is far faster moving, and, yes, you can still rewind time. A great platformer, though of course it's not quite as dazzling as its next-gen bigger brother.

You can still fight while dangling high up in the air



Enemies are huge and pack a mean punch on the GBA

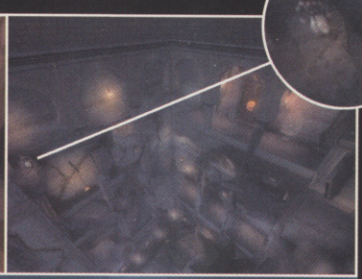
8 OUT OF TEN

LORDS A-LEAPIN'

Check out the awesome detail in even the simplest move of vaulting an enemy. You'll want to take the game to bed and do rude love, it's that pretty

At times like this you need to slow the enemies down to give yourself a chance

You'll never tire of using the wall run move and it's put to good effect in puzzles



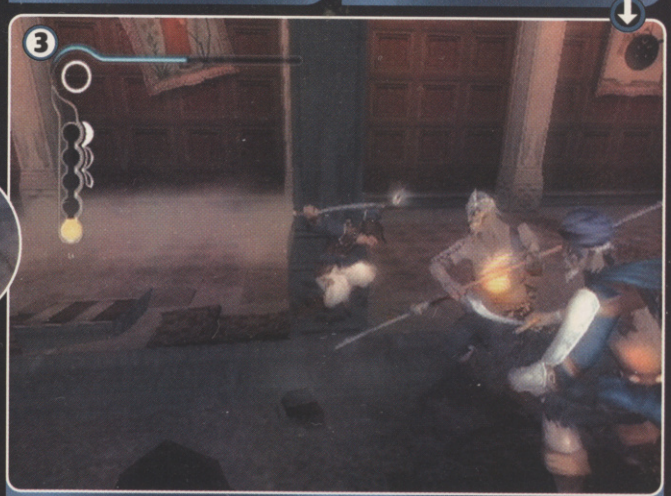
The sense of scale in the different areas is staggering. Hope you're not scared of heights!

ARABIAN FIGHTS

There are so many amazing moments in each individual fight, the game really should have some kind of replay feature to show you your class moves. Check out some of our favourites.

The Prince's tippy-toe attack methods really slays the demon birds

Freeze enemies with the dagger then slice them in two for a quick kill



Using the dodge button helps you to duck and leap enemy swings

The action is split fairly evenly between chasm-spanning, gravity-defying puzzles and acrobatically epic fight sequences. What's so amazing about the scraps is the way The Prince moves around the screen. You can pirouette in the air, blades a-whirling, to form a sort of human shredding machine, or launch yourself from walls holding your swords at arms length to turn into a human javelin.

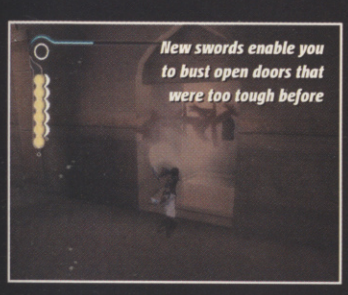
New move combinations are learned as you play and no matter how many you combine together in battle, the results on screen are slick and fluid as a greased jellyfish on ice. Fights are tough and lengthy, and you really feel that these are genuinely badass demons that want you dead, rather than mere sword-fodder thrown in to slow down your Persian adventure.

MAKE LIKE A CIRCUS FREAK

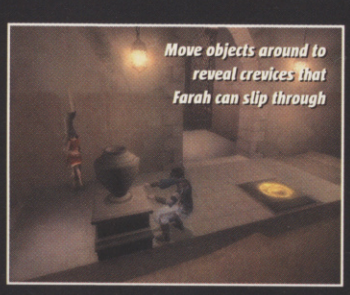
Staking enemies through their sandy hearts is the only way to dispatch them for good (fail and they keep regenerating) and once you've busted them all, you're free to explore the enormous environments. There are tricks and traps everywhere, from spiked floors, gigantic birdcages to negotiate by way of trapezes (mind the poop tray!) and gigantic machines to operate. Just as with the fighting, The Prince moves so gracefully that you'll be running along sheer rock faces and performing impossible leaps from colossal tree trunks without breaking into a sweat.

This exploration and the awesome fighting go together as fluidly as The Prince's animations and if they were all the game offered it would still rock hard. But Prince Of Persia offers much more. Time manipulation, for example. If you mis-time an attack and take a devastating clump on the head you can rewind to avoid the blow, or slow down the flow of time and make kebab meat out of your attackers.

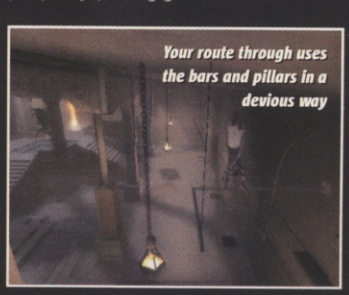
Or you might want to rewind if, say, you've misjudged a ledge and fallen to your death. Simply turn back time and avoid a sticky death at the cruel hands of Mistress Gravity. Your time-shifting abilities and when you can access them develop along with your hero and they form the final touches of perfection to one of the most original and intricately crafted games of the year. Unmissable.



New swords enable you to bust open doors that were too tough before



Move objects around to reveal crevices that Farah can slip through



Your route through uses the bars and pillars in a devious way

GAMES VERDICT

A game that plays even better than it looks, and it looks ace. Tricky puzzles, stunning battles and that magic sense of satisfaction at beating the game make this one of THE games of 2003. **Lee**

- Control the flow of time to save your hide
- You've never seen animation as good as this
- Puzzles and fights so satisfying to beat
- Persian honey Farah isn't playable
- The route through is totally linear

9 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... Legacy Of Kain: Defiance (PS2, XB)

FREE DVD

AGENT PROVOCATEUR

THE GIRLS, THE LINGERIE, THE MOVIE

MONTHLY
FOR MEN

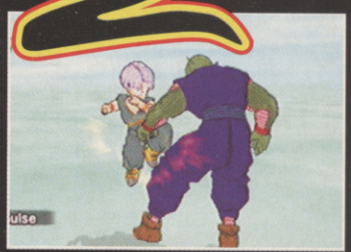
BIGGEST ISSUE EVER

ON SALE NOW

DRAGONBALL Z BUDOKAI 2

"Feel the might of my dress forged from only the purest ice cream cones!"

How does the game get so fast? It's just a hunch, but maybe they sacrifice some detail



A green British Gas engineer is kicked in the gonads by a mutant Safeway stock assistant

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-2
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: ATARI DEV: DIMPS
WWW.DBZ-VIDEOGAMES.COM
REVIEWED ON PS2

LADIES AND GENTS, THE GAME IS DRAGONBALL Z, AND IT'S F-F-F-FAST!

Even if you drank a solution of Viagra, steroids and the kind of additives they put in red-flavoured red drink that never goes out of date and turns your tongue red, you could still never get near the frantic energy of the Dragonball TV series. Until now. Yep, last year's DBZ got some of the way there, but Budokai 2 has seriously upped the ante...

KUNG-FU FREAKING

The basic concept of Budokai 2 is much the same as in previous DBZ games. Kick seven shades of shinola out of Buu and his minions as you do battle for the legendary Dragon Balls. The devil, as always, is in the details.

One of the most noticeable changes is in the sheer amount of fighters and moves. You'll spend hours trying to master all of the available combos and when you do, you'll have some deliciously vicious ways to take your opponent apart.

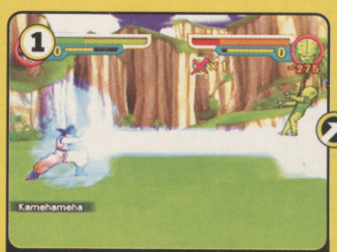
Another valuable addition to Budokai 2 is the ability to fuse two fighters together. For the first time you can meld the fighting prowess of two of your favourite warriors and create a legendary fighter capable of taking on the big bad Buu himself.

If there's a downside to Budokai 2 it might be in the simple nature of the combat. True, the extra moves and fusion aspects do add a fair deal of depth to the new game, but the combat system isn't anywhere near as sophisticated as anyone weaned on Soulcalibur II and Virtua Fighter 4 will be used to. However, if you're looking for a fast and crazy rendering of your favourite cartoon, you could do a lot worse than this. CVG

ARE YOU A SAD AND LONELY SINGLE BLOKE?

Dragonball rocks in multiplayer, but the chaps who make it haven't forgotten all those Billy no-mates out there. So one of the new features is the single-player Dragon mode.

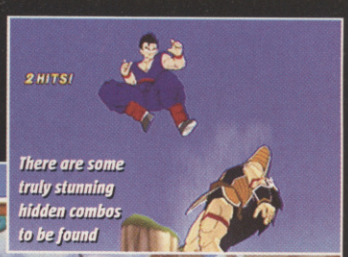
This allows you to team up with a bunch of computer-controlled characters and do battle in an epic quest to stop the powerful Dragon Balls from falling into the wrong hands.



Don't worry if you're a Billy no-mates, you can fight this spiky-haired bloke here

Alone in your bedroom, the power of the Dragon Balls is your responsibility

After the fight, Gohan left his legwarmers on and auditioned for Fame



There are some truly stunning hidden combos to be found

If your fighting skills fail you, distract your enemy with a pizza

You can use the sides of the arena to slam your foes against

Gohan? Go home crying when he eats this 18-hit combo, more like

There are few pleasures in life like stamping on an opponent's head from a great height

games VERDICT

A fast, adrenaline-drenched update to one of last year's most insane fighters. Fans of the show will be quivering with delight. Non-fans knock a point off the score though. **Paul A**

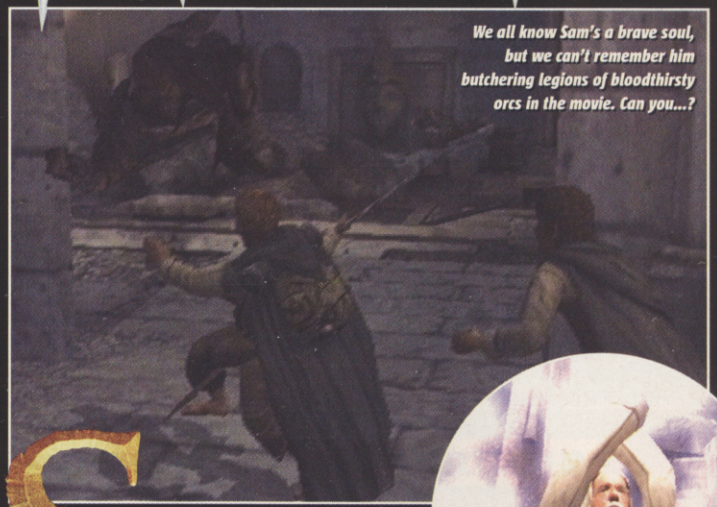
- Tons and tons of new moves
- Destructive environments give you a real sense of the carnage
- Unlikely to convert those who don't already adore the cartoon
- Some of the combos are too complex

7 OUT OF TEN

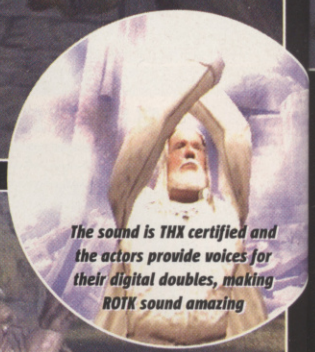
IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Soulcalibur II (PS2, XB, GC)

THE LORD OF THE RINGS

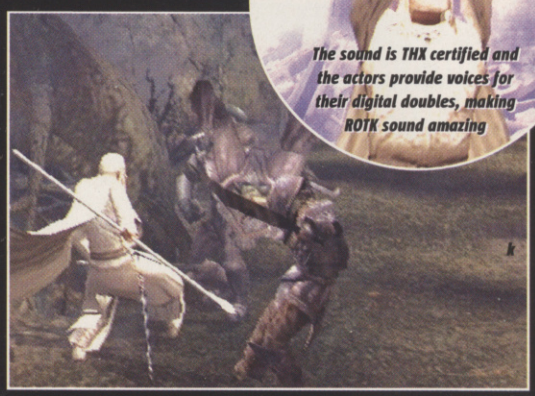
THE RETURN OF THE KING



We all know Sam's a brave soul, but we can't remember him butchering legions of bloodthirsty orcs in the movie. Can you...?



The sound is THX certified and the actors provide voices for their digital doubles, making ROTK sound amazing



Hold down Gandalf's ranged attack button to charge his staff for a more powerful blow

BLENDING IN

ROTK is miles ahead of The Two Towers in how it blends movie footage and in-game action.

Whereas the previous game suffered from some clumsy cuts between introductory FMV and the various stages of the adventure, the movie scenes now 'melt' into the gaming graphics, making it feel as if you've truly become part of the film.

1 Footage from all three movies is used to set the scene and introduce the levels before they begin

2 Rather than awkward cuts between movie footage and gaming graphics, the two actually meld into each other...

4 If you haven't seen the movie or read the books, beware! The footage from the movies may spoil the story for you

3 ...not only does this look great, but it makes it feel more exciting as you pick up exactly where the FMV left off

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 (PC: £34.99) PLAYERS: 1-2 ONLINE GAMING * PUB: ELECTRONIC ARTS * DEV: ELECTRONIC ARTS * WWW.EAGAMES.COM/OFFICIAL/LORDOFTHERINGS/RETURNOFTHEKING/INDEX.JSP REVIEWED ON PS2 ALSO AVAILABLE XBOX, PC, CUBE

CALLING ALL HEROES! MIDDLE-EARTH IS IN CRISIS AND ONLY YOU CAN SAVE THE DAY. AGAIN

They said it couldn't be done: Peter Jackson, a director best known for his low-budget gore flicks, making Tolkien's Lord Of The Rings into three movies, filmed together and released a year apart. Mercifully the doubters were wrong, but can EA manage to equal Jackson's genius and do justice to both the epic story AND kick-ass action in its latest gaming spin-off? Well, yes... and no.

PERFECT PRESENTATION

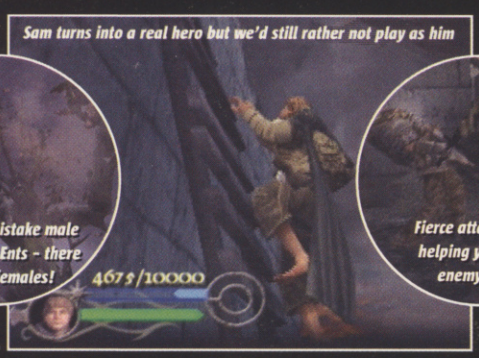
Anyone wanting to extend their Return Of The King movie experience won't go far wrong with EA's console tribute.

Seconds after the introductory FMV ends and the adventure begins, your jaw will hit the floor as you're thrown into the thick of the action at Helm's Deep, the titanic battle that closed the Two Towers movie.

Playing as Gandalf, players must charge around the battlefield, slaughtering Uruk-hais, defending comrades and unleashing cannons, while all around them bombs explode and dozens of warriors clash. It all adds up to one of the most chaotic and brutal battle sequences ever seen in a video game.

Unlike many Hollywood spin-offs, the scenes recreated in Return Of The King look exactly like the movie that inspired them, whether it be Frodo and Sam making their escape from Osgiliath, Aragon fighting his way through the Paths Of The Dead or Gandalf dodging ents and butchering orcs in Fangorn Forest.

When escaping from Osgiliath you can only stay in the open air for a short period of time or else a ringwraith will grab Frodo

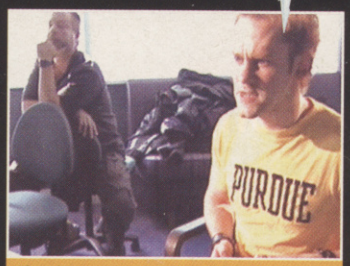


Sam turns into a real hero but we'd still rather not play as him

You can't mistake male and female Ents - there are no females!

Fierce attacks return, helping you bust up enemy shields

The Baradur Bell Ringers were a little short-handed

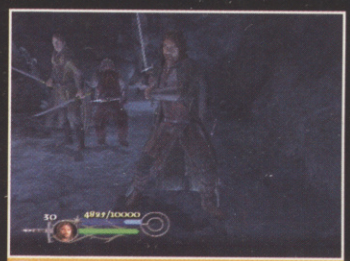


There's concept art and cast interviews to unlock. Hear hobbits talk about videogames!

Once you've finished a level, you can play it as a different character

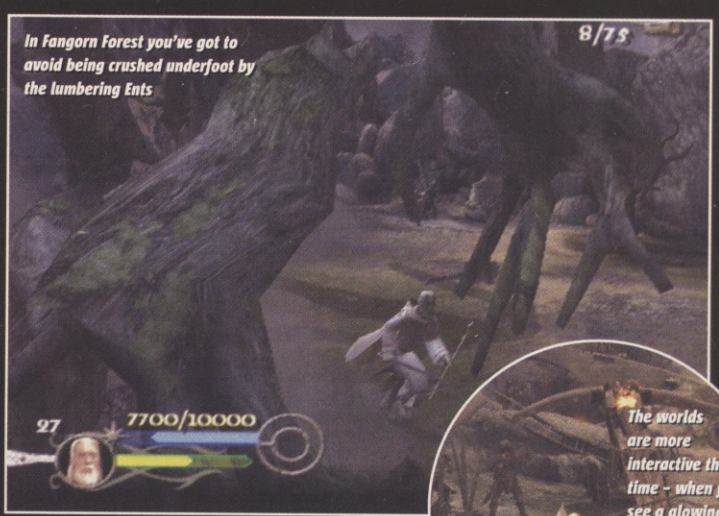
Sometimes you must kill a certain number of nasties before moving on

The levels look amazing but tend to lead you down a narrow, predetermined route. The paths sometimes branch off, but not often enough

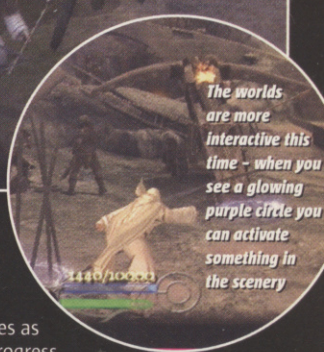


You can play as Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Frodo, Sam and Gandalf, and hidden blokes

With the option to buy moves, the combat is much more engaging this time round...



In Fangorn Forest you've got to avoid being crushed underfoot by the lumbering Ents

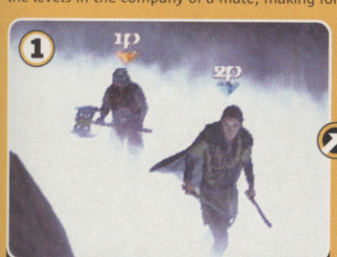


The worlds are more interactive this time – when you see a glowing purple circle you can activate something in the scenery

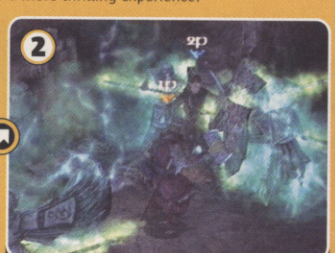
TOLKIEN FOR TWO

Although the single-player adventure is disappointing, the two-player co-op mode is more fun. (In America, by the way, you can play co-op online, but not here. Bummer.)

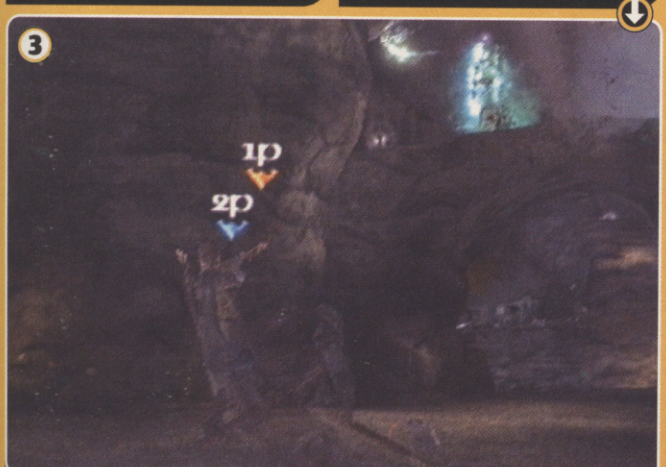
Taking control of various members of the Fellowship, players can hack their way through the levels in the company of a mate, making for a more thrilling experience.



You can play the co-op mode with a mate, but there'll always be arguments over which one plays as Aragorn



There are fewer power-ups in the co-op mode, putting more emphasis on communication and teamwork



When enemy archers are close it's a good idea for Legolas to hang back and use his arrows while Gimli or Aragorn get on with the business of killing monsters on the ground

The stunning graphics also extend to the heroes themselves; motion-captured using the actors' stunt doubles, all the Fellowship swashbucklers look uncannily like their silver screen counterparts. And with animation that's much slicker than in last year's Two Towers game, it really feels as if you're taking part in the most exciting film of 2003.

BUTTON BASHING BISHOP

However, despite ROTK's beautiful presentation, seasoned players will quickly see beyond its glossy exterior. Whereas Jackson's movies capture the essence of Tolkien's trilogy and are among the few fantasy films that powerfully convey the conviction that they're dealing with matters of life and death, ROTK reduces the sprawling mythology to a shallow hack 'n' slash romp that swiftly becomes tiresome.

To decide the fate of Middle-Earth, all players have to do is hammer buttons and follow linear pathways, and it never feels as if you're a key player in the fight against Sauron. And despite the fact that there are loads more fighting moves than before and you can buy new abilities as you progress, it's often difficult to see what's going on as you're surrounded by swarms of slobbering orcs and AI-controlled buddies, meaning that you'll just end up hammering the same buttons and hoping for the best.

Return Of The King looks incredible but, as a wise man probably once said, 'Graphics maketh not the game.' If you're looking for a fantasy adventure of truly epic proportions, best check out Zelda instead. CVG

computer and video games VERDICT

On presentation alone, ROTK is one of 2003's highest scorers. However, it's little more than a standard hack 'n' slash, so only for hardened LOTR fans or as a decent weekend rental. **Dave**

- + Jaw-dropping graphics
- + Incredible sound and music
- + Fun co-op mode
- − Limited gameplay
- − Hard to see what's going on
- − Some sections are brutally difficult

7 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... ■ *Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers (PS2, XB, GC)*

This puzzle is clearly so taxing that the last guy died on the spot

LEGACY OF KAIN
DEFIANCE

REVIEWER LEE SKITTRELL

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: EIDOS DEV: EIDOS
WWW.LEGACYOFKAIN.COM
REVIEWED ON PS2

TWO VENGEFUL VAMPIRES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE. RESULT!

Good stories and good action games are like you and your girlfriend's dad – if they ever meet, they don't get on. Except nobody told the blokes who make Legacy Of Kain about this golden rule, because here you get a stand-up action game rammed with drama.

On the one hand it's a saga as well told as any Shakespearean epic. But on the other it's filled with extreme violence and pointy fangs, and you get to do stuff like chewing on the faces of innocents, drinking their blood and defiling their bodies in a way that would make Satan blush. This is what makes Legacy Of Kain stand out from the crowd. Chomp.

MORE HUMAN GIZZARD, WITH YOUR TEA, VICAR?

Legacy Of Kain: Defiance assumes you're familiar with the plotting of the previous games. There's no space to go into it here, but for the first time in a LOK game, you play as both evil vampire overlord Kain, and his banished ex-best buddy (and sworn enemy) Raziel, each taking a level at a time. Regardless of hero, the action is split evenly between amazingly choreographed fight sequences, with rivers of blood and screen-shattering magic spells, and inventive, if not that original, action-based puzzles. Raziel has the added ability to morph between the Material plane and the twisted Underworld, while Kain has all the human-killing might a vampiric legend should have.

The fast-paced gameplay of the two heroes' stories play out in what must be one of the most enjoyable and gripping videogame stories since, er, the last Soul Reaver game. It's true that it is quite similar to what's gone before, but that only means you get more outstandingly brutal scrapping, more amazing visuals, and lots more devious puzzles to keep you busy. Great, involving, grizzly stuff. CVG

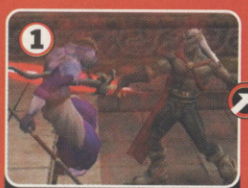
Raziel's wraith blade is more deadly against foes on the Material plane

Demonic enemies become bigger and scarier the further you delve into the story

EVEN DEMONS BLEED

Any game with vampires as its central heroes needs one thing above all else: blood, and lots of it.

LOK: Defiance doesn't disappoint, as great tidal sprays of the sticky red stuff erupt from the severed chests and ravaged arteries of your sorry victims. Kain can feed on corpses to regain health or impale foes on the Reaver to charge the blade's energy, but Raziel feeds on souls rather than blood. Maybe he's gone veggie.

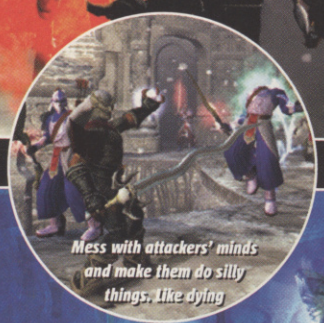


Feed the Reaver to charge its energy and unleash magic

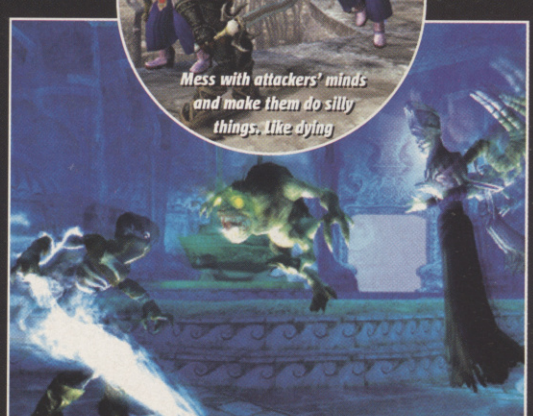
Who said true love can't blossom on a battlefield?

Medic! We hope this Sarafan warrior has BUPA cover

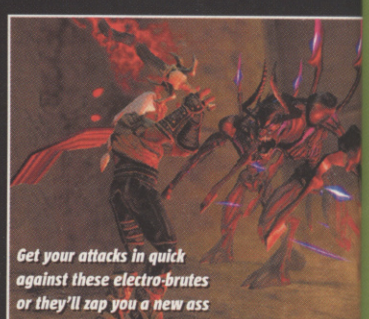
Talk about yer femme fatale, but at least you enjoy death by breasts



Mess with attackers' minds and make them do silly things. Like dying



The Underworld levels have eerie special effects to help creep you out



Get your attacks in quick against these electro-brutes or they'll zap you a new ass

computer and video games VERDICT

One of the most satisfying action games this year and a more than worthy addition to the Kain series. It's just not quite the mega leap forward fans might have hoped for. **Lee**

- The ongoing saga is as gripping as ever
- Astounding visuals and strong characters
- Buckets of blood and entrails
- The 'new' camera is actually a step backward
- The puzzles and fighting feel perhaps a bit too familiar and seen it all before

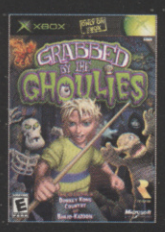
8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... Soul Reaver 2 (PS2) Devil May Cry 2 (PS2)

Zombies are nothing to be afraid of. Especially after you've beaten them silly with their own arms.

From the Creators of Donkey Kong Country and Banjo-Kazooie

Microsoft game studios



Welcome to Ghoulhaven Hall, the haunted home of the dastardly Baron von Ghoul. It's you and Cooper, battling anything the evil Baron puts in your way. Armed with chairs, pool cues and tables, you'll smash your way through over 50 rooms, crushing Skeletons, kicking Ninja Imps, bashing Vampire Chickens and hordes of other dirty fightin' ghoulies. All the while, trying to avoid being bitten, burnt and even mummified. So take a deep breath and get over your fears, you've got a house to wreck.

RARE

GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES™

XBOX

it's good to play together

xbox.com/ghoulies

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PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH

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PLUS 68 HOTTEST GAMES OF 2004

WWE SMACKDOWN HERE COMES THE PAIN

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH

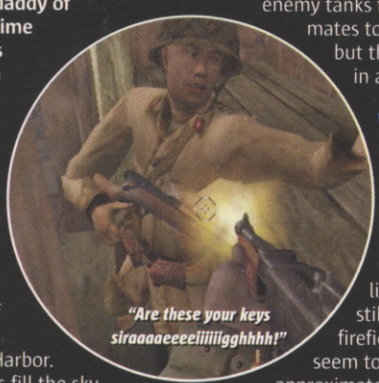
MEDAL OF HONOR RISING SUN

GAME INFO | OUT: NOVEMBER 28 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: EA DEV: EA | WWW.EAGAMES.COM/PS2/MOH_RS/HOME.JSP | REVIEWED ON: PS2 | ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX, CUBE

MEDAL OF HONOR, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? NOOOOOOOOOO...

Everybody loves killing Nazis – how else did the Medal Of Honor series get to be the daddy of wartime shooters? But this latest episode is a radical departure. Instead of jack-booted SS troops, your enemy is the Imperial Army of Japan.

Things start well as you blast away at swarms of Japanese fighter bombers at Pearl Harbor. Hundreds of planes fill the sky. Battleships are blown apart and sink in front of your eyes. Plumes of smoke rise into the dawn. It looks fantastic.



"Are these your keys siraaaaeeeeliiiiiggghhhh!"

But matters soon take a turn for the worse. Okay, so all the MOH elements are there – rousing soundtrack, machine guns to capture, enemy tanks to destroy, squad mates to fight alongside – but they're put together in a cruddy way.

WAR CRIMES

Your squad mates scurry about getting in your way. Shoot them as many times as you like and they still get up. The firefights generally seem to take place approximately five paces apart, and watching your team-mates fight hand-to-hand is like watching two slightly shy, arthritic baboons flirting with each other. It sounds funny, but it's not what you want to see in a Medal Of Honor game.

Even the animations are old hat – we've seen the kicking the grenade away bit and the jumping up and down on one leg when hit in the foot bit in previous MOH games. And the enemy will stand looking the other way, even when his mate ten feet away has been blown to Buddhist hell with a grenade. And what's more, the locations are more drab and dreary than a rainy Monday afternoon in Wolverhampton.

That's not to say Rising Sun is no fun: we still played it through to the end, and at times almost thought it was cool. But our minds were on other things. We were constantly wishing for something more. To us, it felt lazy, like they know people are going to buy this just because it's got the MOH tag, regardless of its quality.

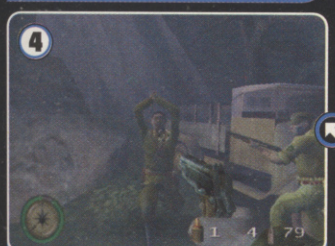
"THAT AIN'T NO TREE! IT'S A... AAIIEEE!"

Fighting against the Japanese is a tad unusual, and occasionally you find yourself hoping you haven't just killed the guy who would later invent Space Invaders.

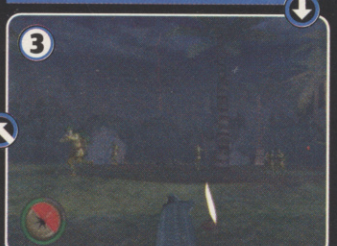
But at least it means the enemy has some new combat styles that you're not used to dealing with in this type of game.

Just like the real war, the Japanese pop up out of little spider holes to ambush you. Crafty little devils, ain't they?

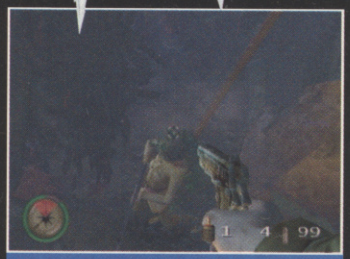
The Japanese soldier was not afraid of using cold steel, and they always attach bayonets to their rifles



Some of the officers carry these mean samurai swords, and they set about you like your name was Bill



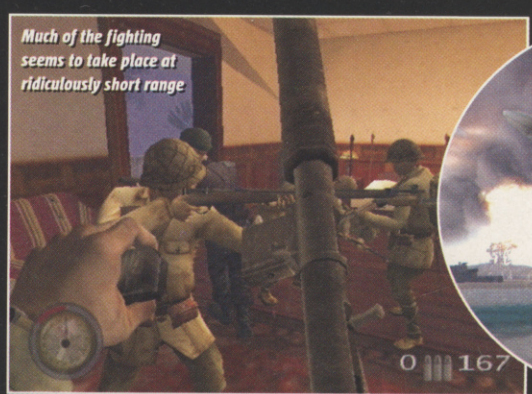
Getting charged by a group of 'banzai' screaming Orientals is a trouser-browning experience. Thank God it's just a game...



See how dark and dull this is? Now imagine it on your TV, with the light reflecting off it...

But it is cool using emplaced machine guns to send your enemies to the death house

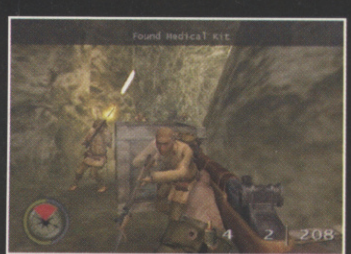
Despite the fact that you'll be playing this on a Japanese console, Japs are just as cruel as Nazis



Much of the fighting seems to take place at ridiculously short range

The opening level looks fantastic

As usual, a few well-placed grenades will see to a tank. Just don't use them all at once



At times it's fun, in the tried-and-tested Medal Of Honor style. Just not ALL the time

GAMES VERDICT

Rising Sun? Rising turd, more like. Okay, so it ain't THAT bad, but we can still think of loads of better first-person shooters, including the last MOH, which is 18 months old. **Steve O**

- Fantastic-looking opening level
- Little-known theatre of war
- Er, that's it really

- Has the gameplay of yesteryear
- Dreary and uninspiring locations
- Feels like we've been there, done that

6 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault (PS2)

CRIMSON SKIES
HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE

Head down to the local Kwik Fit when your plane needs repairing

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-16
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS DEV: MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS
WWW.CRIMSONSKIES.COM
REVIEWED ON: XBOX

TALLY HO! MASSIVE PROPS GOING OUT TO THIS HIGH-FLYING BI-PLANE ADVENTURE

Oh, those magnificent men in their flying machines. They go up-tiddly-up-up, they go down-tiddly-down-down. They go absolutely mental with their giant super-charged detonator cannons and blast every last bogey out of the sky faster than you can say "Now where did I put that spare parachute?"

At least that seems to be the case in Crimson Skies, a game set in an alternate 1930s America that has become divided in warring factions with names like Free Colorado and the Nation of Hollywood. As flying ace extraordinaire Nathan Zachary, it's your job to patrol the skies, protect the weak and send the bad guys packing with their tails between their legs. And preferably on fire.

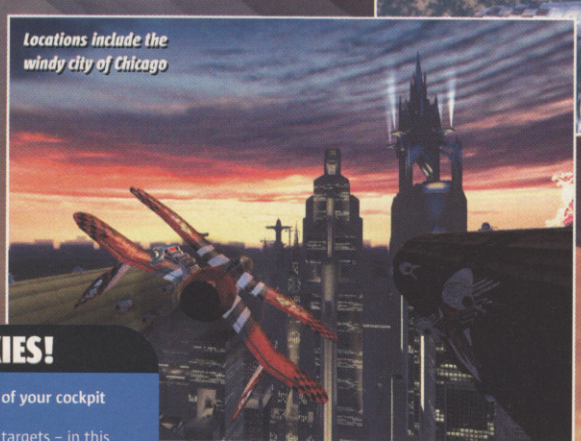
ROLL OUT THE BARREL

The game begins with a quick flying lesson that will have you pulling off barrel rolls and snap turns in no time at all. You only get one plane to play with at first but there are ten to collect, including a very nifty gyrocopter. Missions range from delivering cargo to engaging hangar-loads of enemies in epic dogfights. The gameplay is easy to pick up and instantly addictive, and the cracking storyline, rousing score and respectable voice acting all help to make it feel like you're starring in your very own classic adventure flick. Throw in some ace multiplayer modes and the option to battle up to 15 other players in online dogfights, and you've got an essential purchase for anyone who's ever fancied giving Biggles a run for his money. CVG

This baddie is probably rethinking his career choices right about now. Too late, matey

This one is wishing he'd taken his mum's advice and done accountancy instead

BLAM! We love the smell of barbecued bi-plane in the morning


Locations include the windy city of Chicago

SHOOT FOR THE SKIES!

Sometimes you'll need to abandon the comfort of your cockpit and man the anti-aircraft guns at ground level.

They're especially useful for taking on larger targets – in this instance, our hero takes full advantage of his superior firepower to make a big ole Zeppelin eat lead.

1 Having landed his plane, Nate heads over to the gun turret

2 The view switches to first person as you blast away

4 It's not long before the whole thing bursts into flames...

3 Looks like the blimp is taking a serious battering

Nathan had to pop into town every Thursday to collect his gyro

The invented plane models look quite believable

GAMES VERDICT

Grab some goggles and grow a ridiculous moustache – Crimson Skies is a bally brilliant game for anyone into airborne adventures. Chocks away! **Ellie**

- Lots of addictive, skybound action
- You tackle missions from air and ground
- Planes to collect and upgrades to earn

- Come on, guys, a bit bit more variation would have been nice
- No option to fly in first-person mode

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... Sky Odyssey (PS2), Pilotwings (N64)

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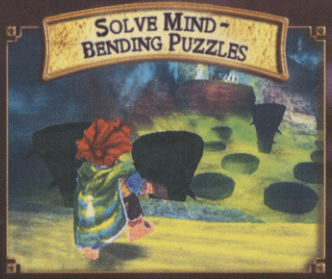
BASED ON THE LITERARY WORKS OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN



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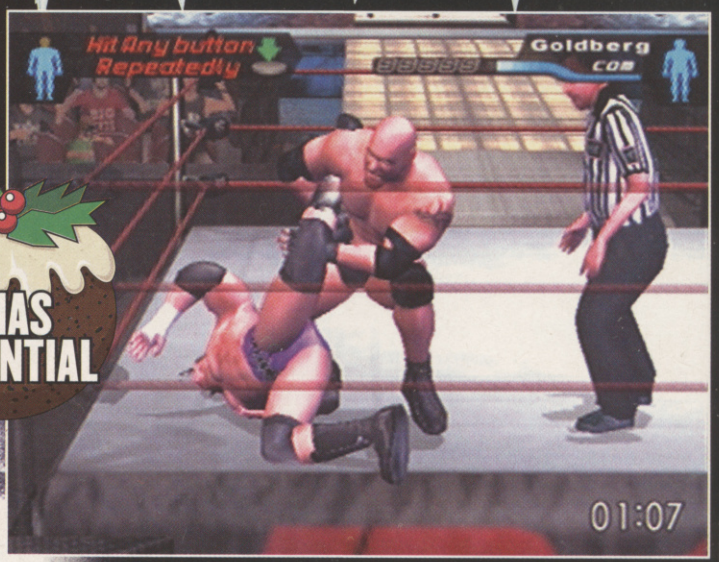
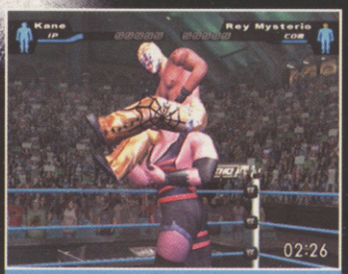
XMAS ESSENTIAL

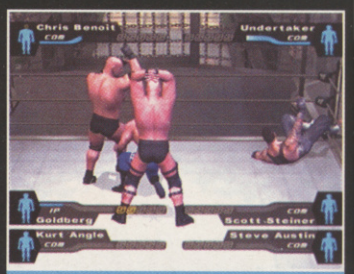


Goldberg didn't realise his opponent was Stretch Armstrong

SMACKDOWN! HERE COMES THE PAIN



Kane's looking a bit flash in his new mask... Oh hang on, that's Rey Mysterio!



Steve Austin and Goldberg show off their Party Boy moves in the Elimination Chamber

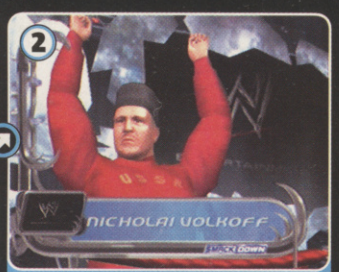
GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-6
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: THQ DEV: YUKES
WWW.THQ.COM
REVIEWED ON: PS2

DON'T YOU... FORGET ABOUT ME

Remember Acclaim's Legends Of Wrestling series? Seems THQ do as it's incorporated ten of the WWE's former stars into Here Comes The Pain.

The Legion of Doom, Hillbilly Jim and even an old-skool Undertaker are back for some more punishment. Remember the Iron Sheik? You do now.

You won't have seen the Iron Sheik in the WWE since the late '80s, but now he's back!



The old-timers enter the arena in mini-rings on wheels, just like the old days

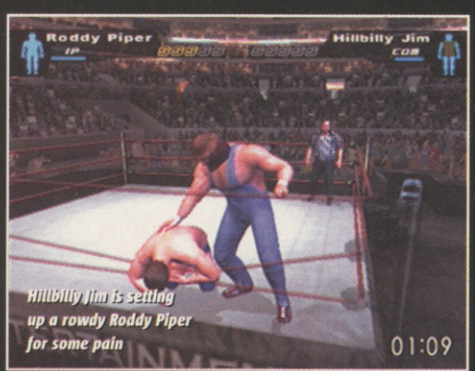
THIS IS *THE* GAME, BECAUSE IT'S THAT DAMN GOOD

If, as Triple H's entrance music states, 'it's not about the game, it's the way that you play it,' then THQ has certainly played a blinder with Here Comes The Pain. Every year the SmackDown! series gets better, so that we've come to expect a long list of improvements each time a new game hits. This year though, the latest instalment is something really special.

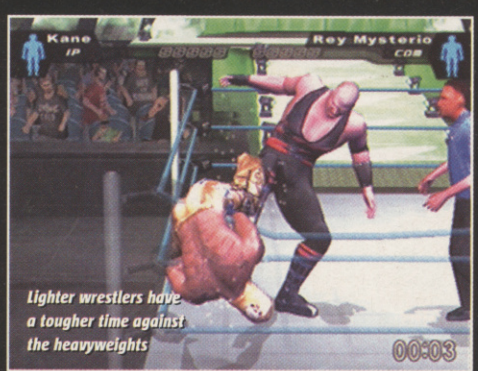
SHOW 'EM WHAT YOU GOT

As you scan over the list of stuff that's been added to the new game, you can almost hear Chris Tarrant in the background saying "but we don't want to give you that, yet" – and then reeling out even more new stuff. With the Elimination Chamber, Bra and Panties matches with a dry white wine for the ladies and – at long last – blood, HCTP offers up some real treats, but the best improvement takes place in the squared circle.

The wrestling engine itself has been completely overhauled and offers the best recreation of the sport we've ever played. Limb-specific damage has been added, allowing you to focus your attacks on individual body parts, causing a rival wrestler to wince in pain and, if you damage them enough, disabling their signature moves. Weight detection means that the lightweight wrestlers can no longer go to town on the heavyweights – Spike Dudley can no longer power bomb someone like Kane, and Victoria won't lift Rikishi

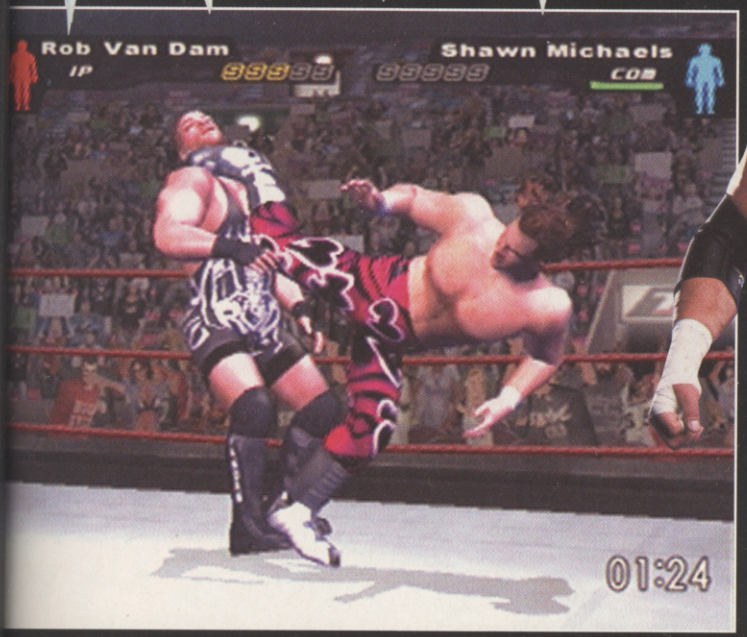


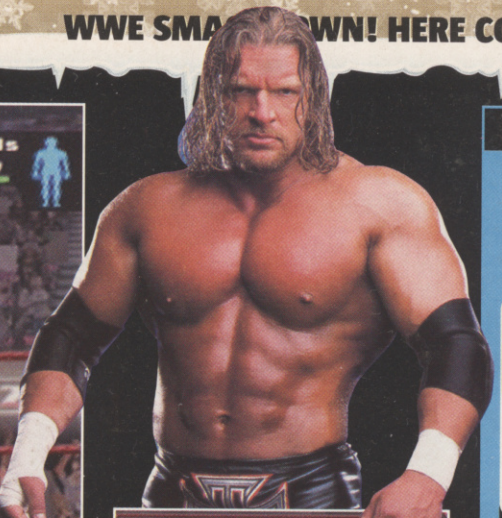
Hillbilly Jim is setting up a rowdy Roddy Piper for some pain



Lighter wrestlers have a tougher time against the heavyweights

Stephanie McMahon dishes out the punishment on her Dad





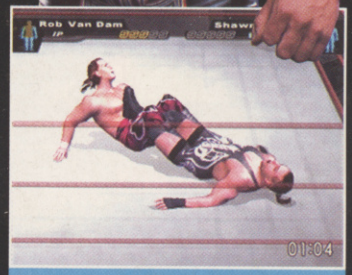
an inch. There's also vastly improved reversals and submission moves, making each bout far more tactical than before.

CAN YOU BELIEVE WHAT WE'RE SEEING?

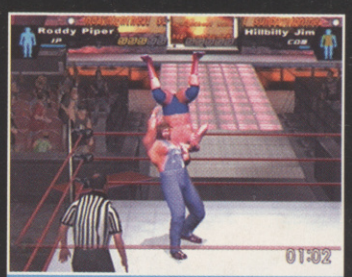
Matches now flow back and forth like a tug-of-war match at a village fete. Yukes has even incorporated a tug-of-war feature into submission moves – while the victim tries to crawl to the safety of the ropes, you pound the buttons to try and keep them in the centre of the ring. It also pays to know each wrestler's finishing moves, as if you want to perform Rock's People's Elbow or Jericho's Lionsault, you have to physically place your opponent in the correct position. In another piece of cool thinking, you can also now steal your opponents finishing moves to really impress the crowd.

With an improved Season mode, an updated roster, the most versatile Create-A-Wrestler yet and even legendary wrestlers from WWE's past, Here Comes The Pain offers a lot of game for your money. You'll be playing this well into next year and still finding new stuff. The best damn wrestling game on the planet has just gotten even better.

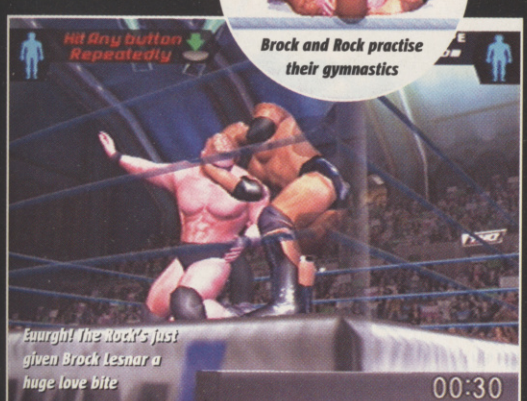
Brock and Rock practise their gymnastics



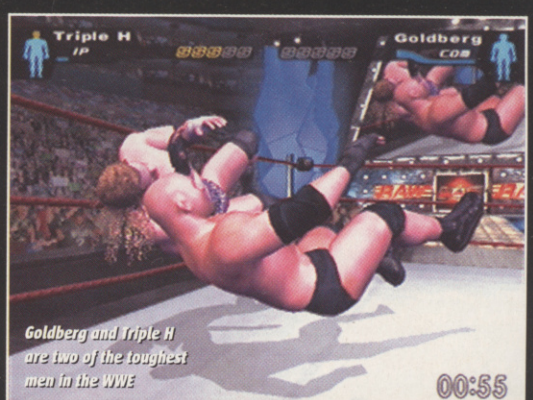
Submission moves now play a more important part in the game



Power bombs and other high impact moves will cause more damage to your opponent



Euurgh! The Rock's just given Brock Lesnar a huge love bite

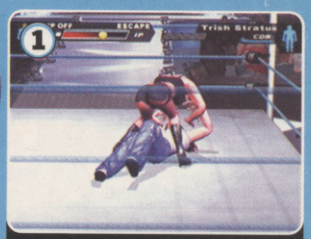


Goldberg and Triple H are two of the toughest men in the WWE

FOR THE LADIES

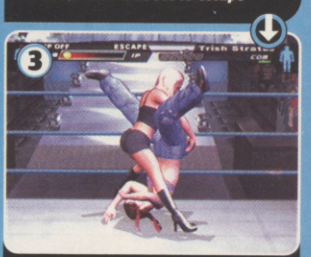
Pick two ladies and throw them into a Bra and Panties match for a few minutes of mindless hilarity.

The idea is to de-robe your opponent down to their revealing underwear. Vince McMahon, you're a genius!



Trish Stratus is having a good tug at Lita's skimpy top, go on girl!

Lita's turn, but the bar in the top right indicates Trish is about to escape



Trish has disposed of Lita's top, now she's going for her smalls

Sable shows off her charms while celebrating with Torrie Wilson's shirt

Torrie fights back, with lots of damage to Sable and now she's got her slacks

FANCY A FACELIFT?

The Create-A-Wrestler is back, allowing you to create unique freaks or recreate wrestlers who've been left out.

It's good, but there's still no Create-A-Move. We suggest THQ takes a look at EA Sports' Game Face to see how to move this area forward.

Every element of your wrestler's body can be stretched and reshaped

Once again, it's very easy to quickly create something that's totally insane

The way you choose your wrestler's facial appearance has changed – it's creepy!

computer and video games VERDICT

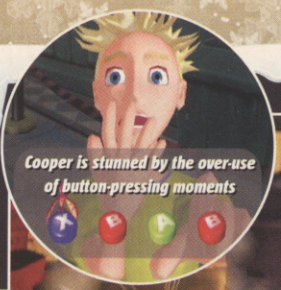
Here Comes The Pain takes the best bits of the SmackDown! series and adds a long list of improvements. There's no tucks really work to make this the best wrestler out there. **Alex H**

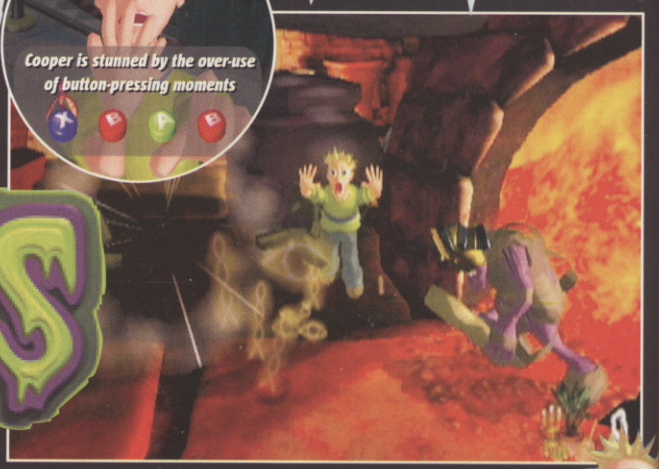
- ■ The wrestling side is the best it's ever been
- ■ Location-specific damage – work your rival!
- ■ Very versatile – there's so much to do!
- ■ No online play – maybe next year
- ■ If only we could rip CDs like Raw 2 on Xbox
- ■ CAW is still good, but EA's Game Face beats it

9 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... ■ WWE Raw 2 (XB) ■ Def Jam Vendetta (PS2, GC)

GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES



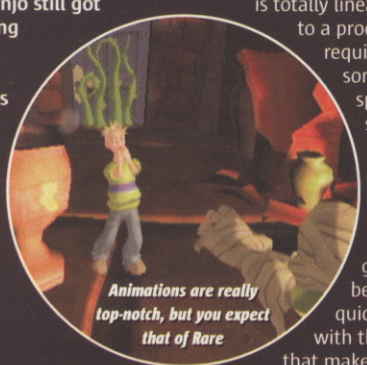


Most of the time you'll be desperately avoiding contact with enemies

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS DEV: RARE
WWW.XBOX.COM
REVIEWED ON XBOX

BATTER BEEZLEBUB'S BEASTIES ON YOUR BOX

And so, the moment of truth approaches – and just in time for Presentmas. Microsoft and Rare's first Xbox title. But has the house that built Banjo still got the knack for making gorgeous-looking games, titles that spoon-feed globules of fun and exciting gameplay, appealing to absolutely everyone on the gaming planet? Based on this first Xbox effort, the short answer is 'nope'.



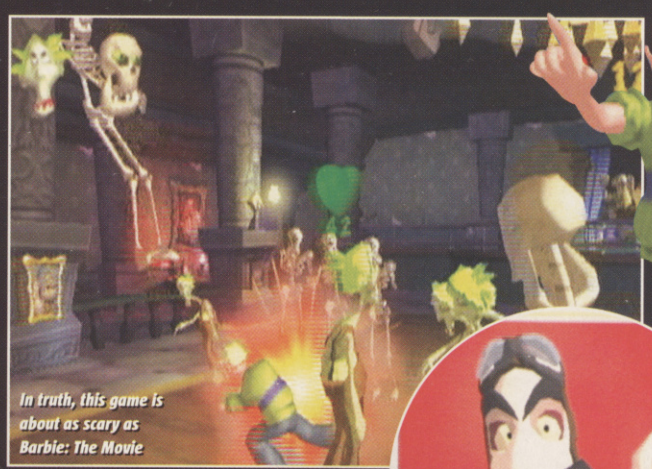
Animations are really top-notch, but you expect that of Rare

TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN

To be fair, the humour is still there and as cheeky as ever. From the opening sequence showing Cooper and his lady chancing upon a dark mansion it's evident this isn't a game to be taken too seriously. The cutscenes are quite literally a comic book, and the game's 'Scooby Doo meets The Addams Family' vision of a haunted mansion is carried on through the whole thing.

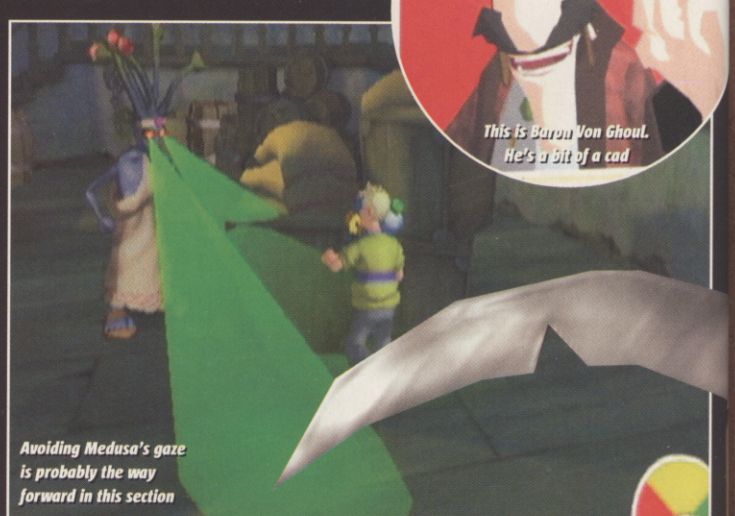
But the good stuff doesn't last. The gameplay kicks in and it becomes apparent that Grabbed By The Ghoulies is totally linear, and boils down to a procession of rooms requiring you to do something very specific. It could be smashing stuff up, or finding an enchanted item, or a timed challenge to kill a certain amount of ghouls. Whatever, it becomes dull very quickly and, combined with the control system that makes you feel oddly disconnected to the action, playing isn't a huge amount of fun. Attacking with the right thumbstick means that fighting strategies are about as subtle as a neon-lit sledgehammer.

All this points towards a game aimed at wee nippers who'll love the comic book humour – not to mention the chronically weedy Easy mode. It's just a shame that in between the funny bits (and collecting random objects – hey, this is a Rare game after all), it's just too simplistic to really grab YOU by the, well, you know.

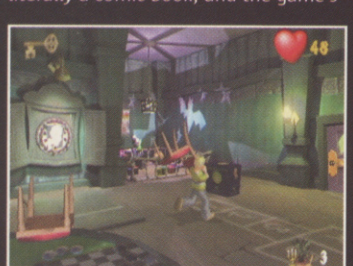


In truth, this game is about as scary as Barbie: The Movie

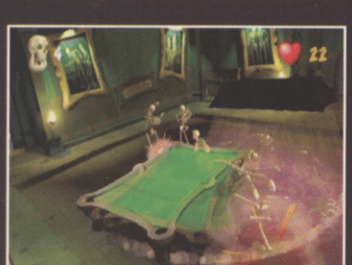
This is Baron Von Ghoul. He's a bit of a cad



Avoiding Medusa's gaze is probably the way forward in this section



For this 'puzzle' the game suggests that the key is in a 'Rare' item. Try the Xbox, mate

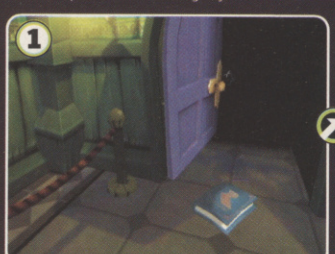


Spinning a billiards table is a fine way of clearing the late drinkers out of a bar

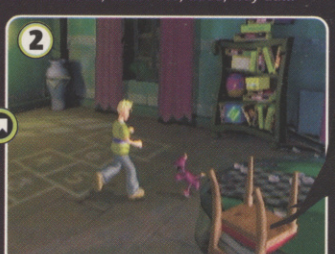
OLD TRICKS

If Rare games are known for anything, it's the way they always get you collecting random stuff along the way. Grabbed By The Ghoulies is no exception.

You're after hidden books that unlock bonus challenges. Sounds promising, but the tasks are just room challenges you've done before. Is that dull, dude? Yes, dude, way dull.



Finding all the books means destroying everything you see...



Only then can you embrace the bonus games and get your money's worth

computer and video games VERDICT

Looks like a million bucks, but in terms of excitement and all-round fun, it lacks in almost every department. One for only the most undemanding kids. **Martian**

- As with all Rare games, Grabbed By The Ghoulies looks excellent
- Trademark Rare humour abounds

- The controls leave you frustrated and disconnected, possibly even suicidal
- Too much repetition. Repetition. Repetition

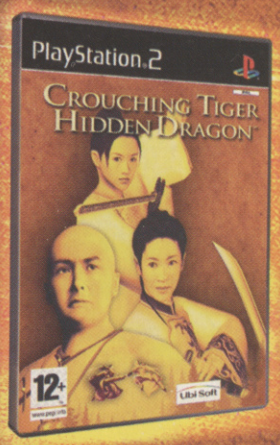
5 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... Luigi's Mansion (GC) Project Zero (Xbox)

UNLEASH THE MARTIAL ARTS MAGIC OF
THE OSCAR® WINNING SMASH HIT MOVIE

CROUCHING TIGER HIDDEN DRAGON™

OFFICIAL
GAME OF
THE MOVIE



WHEN LEGENDRY WARRIORS VIE TO CONTROL THE SWORD OF DESTINY,
PREPARE FOR THE FIGHT OF A LIFE TIME

28TH NOVEMBER 2003

MASTER SUPER HUMAN MARTIAL ARTS

INCLUDES AN EXCLUSIVE "MAKING OF" VIDEO

HTTP://CROUCHINGTIGER.UBI.COM

Ubi Soft ENTERTAINMENT

PlayStation.2

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Genki

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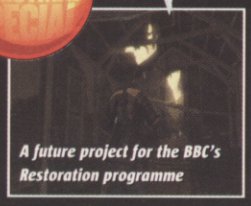
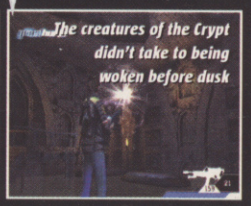

A future project for the BBC's Restoration programme

They don't look any prettier through your binoculars!

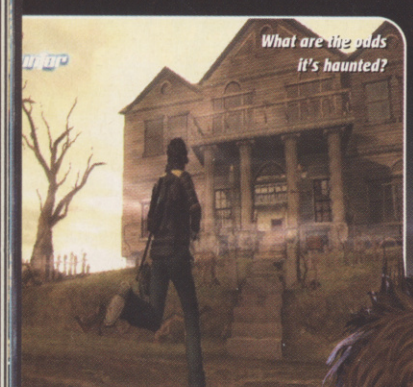

The creatures of the Crypt didn't take to being woken before dusk

ghost hunter

GAME INFO | OUT: NOVEMBER 21 | COST: £39.99 | PLAYERS: 1 | REVIEWED ON: PS2

ONLINE GAMING | PUB: SCEE | DEV: SCEE STUDIO | WWW.UKPLAYSTATION.COM

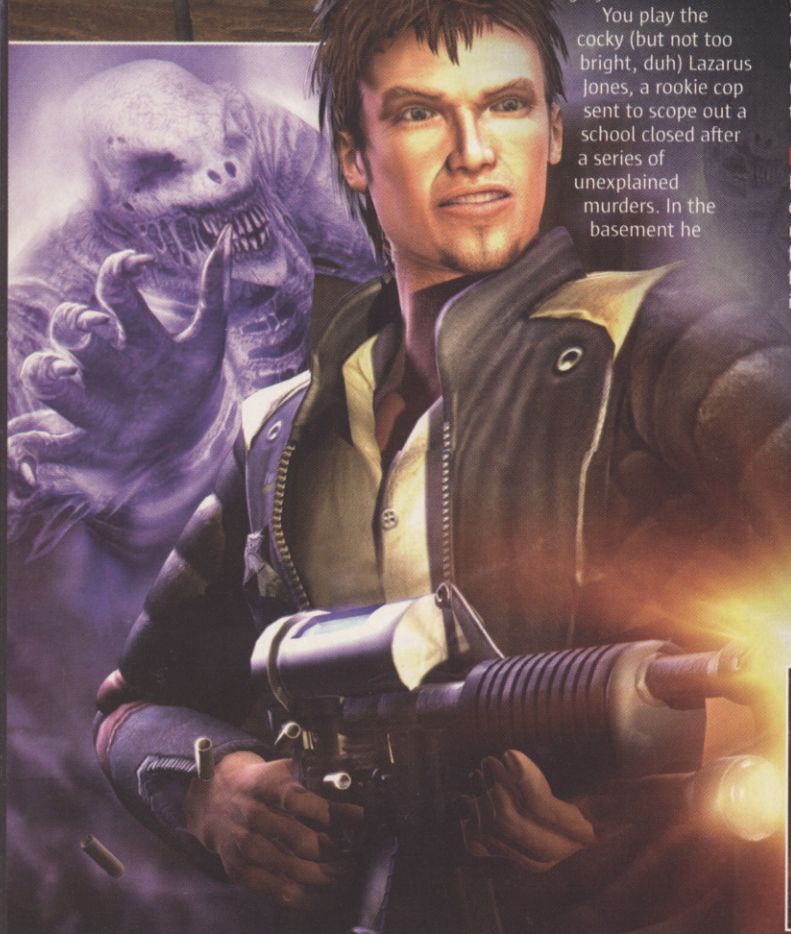
THE EVIL DEAD ARE RISING AND THEY HAVE A TASTE FOR BLOOD – YOURS!


What are the odds it's haunted?

Loot a few tomb-raiding ideas from Lara, sprinkle them with the charm of Medievil, add a dash of art design from Shadowman and then stir in the plot of Ghostbusters.

Pour into your PS2, play well into the small hours of the morning and you'll come up with Ghosthunter; part adventure, part shoot 'em up – and a lot of gory kicks.

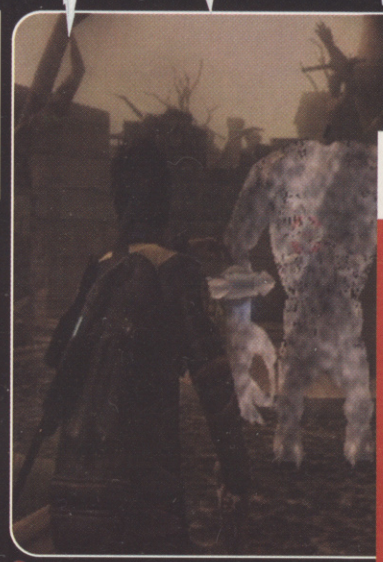
You play the cocky (but not too bright, duh) Lazarus Jones, a rookie cop sent to scope out a school closed after a series of unexplained murders. In the basement he stumbles upon the laboratory of a professor who has been investigating supernatural phenomena. When Lazarus accidentally releases the professor's carefully captured ghosts, he relies on an arsenal of spook juice-powered weaponry and a pair of specially calibrated spectral binoculars (what else?) to help him hunt down ghouls, goblins and ugly-looking monsters, and send them back to the Ever After where they belong!

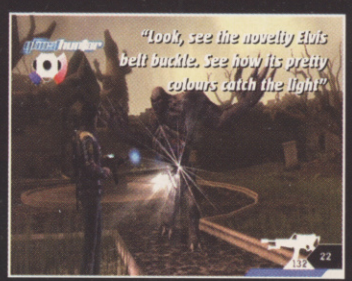


I SEE DEAD PEOPLE

For a game that borrows much from existing classics, Ghosthunter still feels refreshingly new. But it does have its faults, like invisible walls that stop you freely wandering landscapes, and infuriatingly rare health pick-ups. Also, while locations are amazingly detailed they're disappointingly inert – even weedy objects like lanterns and barrels are indestructible to point blank shotgun blasts.

That said, lightning-paced gameplay does help make up for this, drawing you into each level, keeping you playing until you've sent all the spooks back to Hell. CVG


"I can never get away with telling lies. People seem to see straight through me"


"Look, see the novelty Elvis belt buckle. See how its pretty colours catch the light"

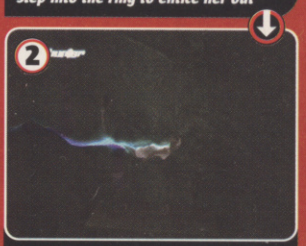
This testicle belonging to England rugby captain Martin Johnson must be destroyed

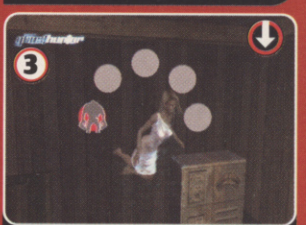
MEET MY MATE ASTRAL... SHE'S *DEAD* FIT

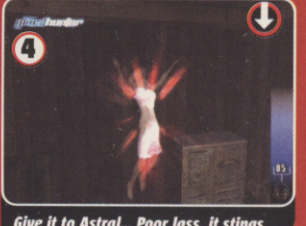
To get through some parts of each level, you'll need the help of Astral, your mute, ethereal accomplice.

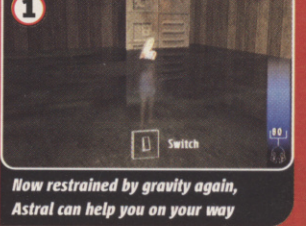
She can take on the powers of the ghosts you have captured, and help you with tasks too difficult for a mere human.

Step into the ring to entice her out


Astral can glide through water and float to platforms you couldn't reach


Select the powers of one of your previously captured ghosts


Give it to Astral... Poor lass, it stings



Now restrained by gravity again, Astral can help you on your way

GAMES VERDICT

Although it doesn't break any new ground, Ghosthunter has enough twists to keep it engaging. Guaranteed to glue you to your controller and scare you witless. Gavin Arrgh!

- Combines fast action and puzzles
- Witty and well voiced cutscenes
- Creepy atmosphere

- Lack of interaction with scenery
- Weapons let you down at crucial moments
- Disappointingly linear gameplay

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Silent Hill 3 (PS2, XB, GC) ShadowMan 2 (PS2)

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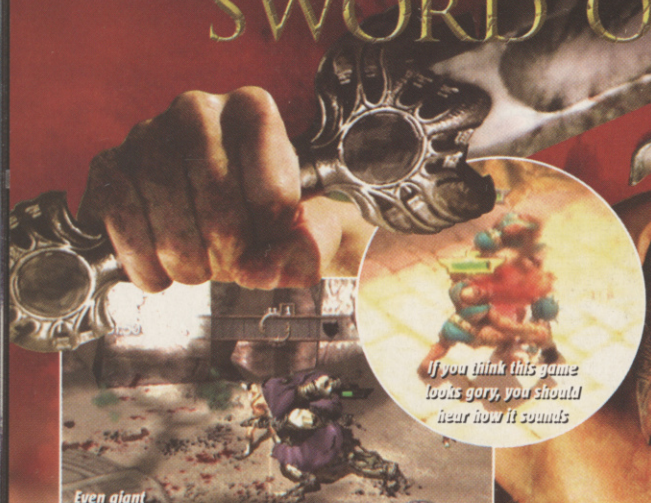
GLADIATOR
SWORD OF VENGEANCE



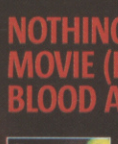
Thrax makes a point in the most dramatic way possible

The peaceful paradise of Elysium is where you receive your quests

Pretty effects don't hide the simple gameplay

GAME INFO OUT: NOVEMBER 21 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: ACCLAIM DEV: ACCLAIM
WWW.ACCLAIM.COM/GAMES/GLADIATOR
REVIEWED ON PS2

NOTHING TO DO WITH THE ACE MOVIE (BOO!), BUT LOADS OF BLOOD AND GUTS (HURRAH!)



If we gave marks for gore, this would rate a ten. Not only are the visuals a non-stop gut-splash party, but the sound effects leave you regretting last night's curry into the bargain. Blech.

So, if you like your fighting action bloodier than a butcher's apron, Acclaim's cartoon hack 'em up will hit the spot. And not only will you get to dismember fellow gladiators in glorious blood-o-colour, but the game's also chock-full of Sinbad-style monsters, like the Cyclops and skeleton warriors, so you can get to dismember them as well.

SWORD IN THE BONE

You star as Thrax, a Roman gladiator out to overthrow an evil tyrant. Helping you on your way is a catalogue of flashy fighting combos. Most of these involve swinging a large weapon, although Thrax can also thrust, roll and kick. And if you fill your special 'blood' meter you get access to magic, too – pretty handy for tackling large gangs of monsters.

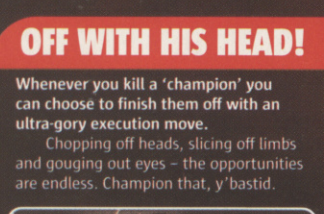
With this simple gameplay, it's clear Acclaim has tried to discourage button bashing by rewarding inventive attack combos with power-ups. This is a good idea. Or, it *would* be if you really *needed* cool attack combos to progress through the game. But you don't – at least not for quite some time. In fact, you can get a fair way through Gladiator without knowing *any* of these moves. Just thrash randomly at your gamepad like it's Slipknot's drumkit and you'll get on. Add to that a sometimes shockingly bad camera, and the game's clearly limited.

Even so, if you love a feisty beat 'em up, you'll still enjoy Gladiator: its frantic pace will wear your fingers to the bone, and there's always the gore to gross you out. CVG

OFF WITH HIS HEAD!

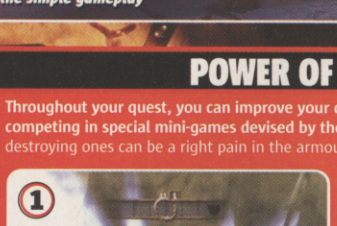
Whenever you kill a 'champion' you can choose to finish them off with an ultra-gory execution move.

Chopping off heads, slicing off limbs and gouging out eyes – the opportunities are endless. Champion that, y'bastid.


This mythological nasty has just been executed in the most gruesome fashion

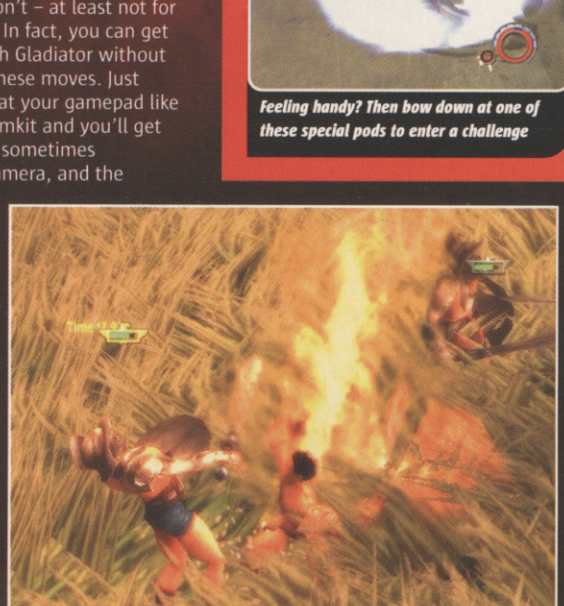
POWER OF THE GODS

Throughout your quest, you can improve your character's attributes and weapons by competing in special mini-games devised by the Gods. Most are easy, but the barrel-destroying ones can be a right pain in the armoured botty plate.



Feeling handy? Then bow down at one of these special pods to enter a challenge

In this one you have to kill a load of guys in a strict time limit. Very imaginative...


Combine combos to unleash extra power

computer and video games VERDICT

This is button-bashing, slash 'em up stuff, and quite done well. Don't expect it to keep you occupied for long, but as anger management therapy, it's a killer. **Stephen**

- Simple, brutal and easy-to-pick-up fun
- Goriest sound effects ever!
- Captures the Ancient Rome look well

- Incredibly repetitive and a bit too easy
- The camera can be very restrictive
- It will destroy your fingers!

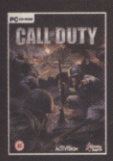
7 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... Dynasty Warriors 4 (PS2, Xb)

CALL OF DUTY

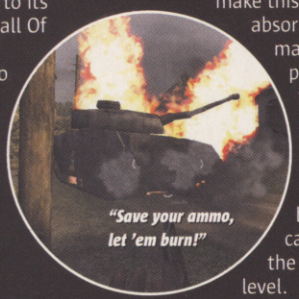
WE'RE GOING TO STICK OUR NECKS OUT AND SAY THAT THIS IS THE GREATEST EVER SHOOTER ON PC*

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-32
ONLINE GAMING
* PUB: ACTIVISION * DEV: INFINITY WARD
* WWW.CALLOFDUTY.COM
REVIEWED ON PC CD ROM



There we were, eagerly awaiting Half-Life 2, when from out of nowhere Call Of Duty charges up and bayonets us in the guts. Truly, the battle for first-person shooting supremacy begins here.

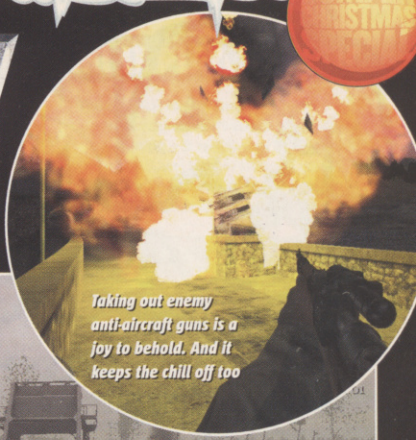
From the beginning to its heart-stopping finale, Call Of Duty embroils you in a collection of missions so terrifying and so intense that you'll actually believe you're on the WWII battlefield. Bullets thump down around you as you desperately crawl for the flimsiest cover to protect your trembling body, watching as wounded comrades buck agonisingly on the floor like beached fish.


"Save your ammo, let 'em burn!"

KILL AND BE KILLED

You and your outfit, be it American, British or Russian, work your way through cities and villages, street by street, slaughtering enemy scum and taking down tanks and anti-aircraft guns. The horror on the faces of your friends as you charge, out-manned and out-gunned, with hot Nazi death raining down around you, along with the subtle yet beautiful soundtrack and ear-bleeding warfare sound effects make this an experience more absorbing than a man-sized incontinence pad. And to offset the mayhem, you're occasionally thrown behind enemy lines on daring solo missions to sabotage German bases, before the carnage resumes with the next awe-inspiring level.

Honest, guv'nor, it's that good. In fact, Call Of Duty is (currently) the greatest shooter ever on PC. It's also the only FPS available right now which has even an outside chance of challenging the mighty Half-Life 2 when it finally appears. And praise doesn't come any higher than that.

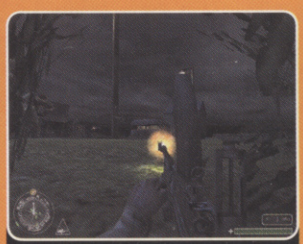

Taking out enemy anti-aircraft guns is a joy to behold. And it keeps the chill off too

One of the most thrilling missions sees you massively outnumbered as you attempt to hold a village against Nazi hordes

HAVE SOME OF THAT, FRITZ!

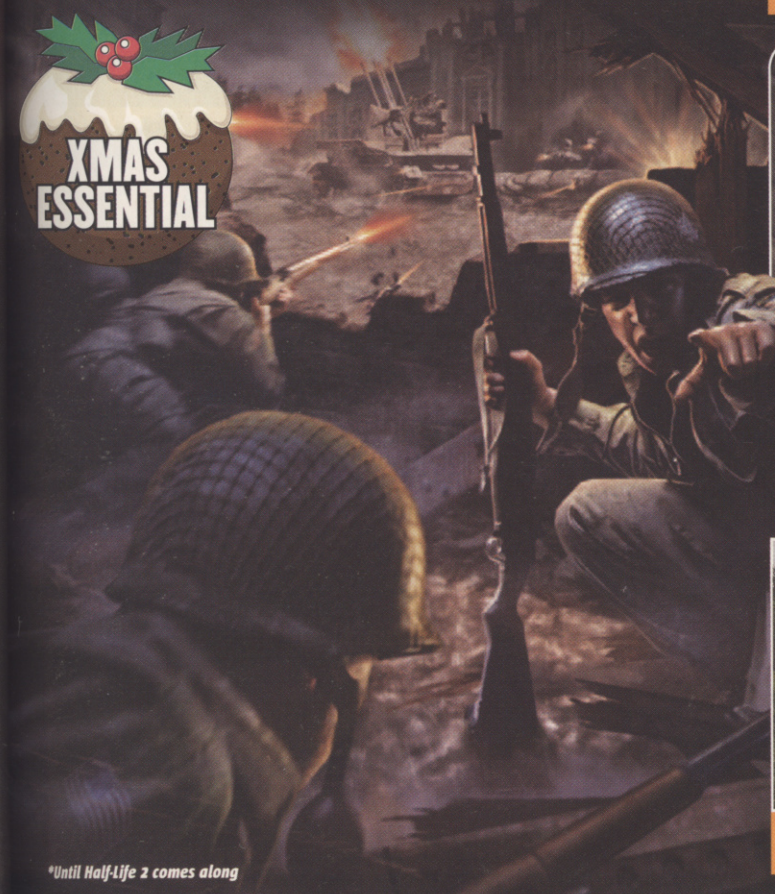
In CoD you have the ability to suppress the enemy with lunatic-like bursts of machine-gun fire.

Pop your head round a corner, let loose a barrage of lead at a group of enemy soldiers, and watch them cower. Then, while they're hiding, you can run out and flank them. "Cap'n, got meself another couple of them there Nazis."


Fire at the heads of enemies and guffaw as they cack themselves

During the game, you play as grunts of all nationalities. So long as it's not Axis

XMAS ESSENTIAL



*Until Half-Life 2 comes along

Mounted machine guns make mincemeat out of advancing enemy troops

After five years of killing, the Allies and Germans settle the war with a drag race

computer and video games VERDICT

The most intense, realistic and thrilling shooter ever to grace a screen. No other PC game makes you believe you're on a battlefield like this. You'd be insane to miss it. **Sgt Korda**

- Unparalleled atmosphere
- Incredibly immersive
- Superb set pieces

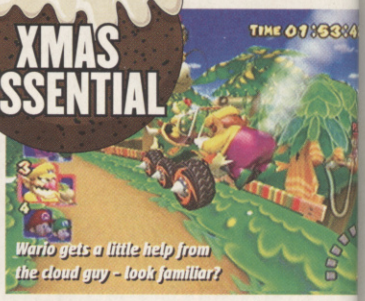
- Occasional AI glitches
- A few overly obvious scripted moments

9 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault (PC)

MARIO KART Double Dash!!

XMAS ESSENTIAL



Wario gets a little help from the cloud guy – look familiar?

WACKY RACES

The crazy tracks are just one of the things that make Double Dash!! such a fun experience.

There are some familiar faces and some new additions, but every single one has some fantastic touches. Check out Donkey Kong Mountain...

Hold on, that looks like a really big jump... and what's with the smoke plume?

WHEEEE! It was a cannon and now you're hurtling to the top of the mountain!

What goes up must come down! Cane the mountainside but watch out for rock slides!

Wario's cellulite-ridden chubby butt cheeks flap in the breeze as you reach the summit

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW | COST: £39.99 | PLAYERS: 1-8 | PUB: NINTENDO | DEV: NINTENDO | WWW.NINTENDO-EUROPE.COM | REVIEWED ON NINTENDO GAMECUBE

MAKING MARIO KART MAGIC HAPPEN ALL OVER AGAIN

There are moments in life when you're so overcome with relief that you go weak at the knees... like when your girlfriend opens your pants drawer and doesn't notice the girly mag you've got hidden there.

Playing Double Dash!! is one of these moments. We've waited ten years for a worthy successor to SNES Mario Kart and finally Nintendo has managed to recapture that shell-slinging magic.

Bob-ombs explode in a mushroom cloud of flame, taking out anyone in the blast radius

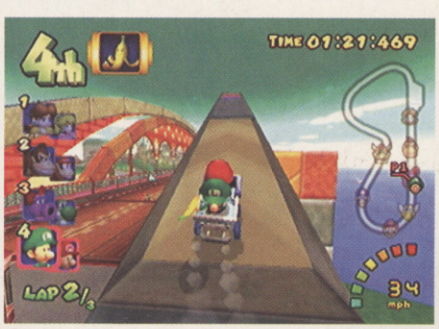
GREAT DOG GAG ON ITS WAY

At first it looks worryingly different. The ground-hugging karts of the original have been replaced by vehicles specific to each character, so Donkey Kong gets a wooden jalopy and Wario a convertible.

You choose two characters each with their own special weapon, and then a kart that best suits their weight. You can't have fat ass Wario and chubby Bowser on a light kart with face-melting acceleration, but you can shove them on a heavy monstrosity with a top speed measured in machs. It adds a whiff of strategy to the races but doesn't change the basic Kart formula.

And that makes us happier than a dog that's just discovered it can lick its own nuts. Mario Kart on SNES was almost the pinnacle of gameplay

Spin out or get hit by a shell and your partner might get dragged from the kart!



On each course check every single nook and cranny for sneaky shortcuts, like these boosts on the bridge

Some of the special weapons are massive. Imagine this shell creeping up behind you!

You can't hop, but the powerslide speed boost is still there... if you know how to do it!

Midnight Club meets Mario Kart as you scream through the streets

Racers stay bunched together to keep the excitement at keck-browning levels

Some of the special weapons are massive. Imagine this shell creeping up behind you!

Weapons are an essential part of the race - make sure you use them wisely!

A character's weight decides which kart you can drive

Mr Kong's jalopy is a new addition to the range of karts on offer

Switching your characters isn't a huge part of the game but adds a nice bit of personality

Every track has obstacles gleaned from Mario World like these ice-skating Shy Guys

perfection – infuriatingly simple, deliciously difficult, and more addictive than boobies. While Mario Kart 64 sadly diluted an almost perfect mixture, Double Dash!! has distilled it to glorious GameCube perfection.

The racing is arcade handling at its finest, with karts sliding around corners, sparks spitting from wheels and pillion passengers clinging on for dear life. Weapons add an extra level of fun and frustration. You can go from first to last in an instant, but you never feel cheated – the balance between good judgement and crappy luck is perfect.

The tracks are wicked, too, bustling with activity. In fact, the whole game is infused with such an sense of energetic personality that you'd have to be duller than a Volvo Estate not to get all giddy just at the thought of it.

Don't even get us started on the multiplayer. Put it this way: it's solid multiplayer gold, and if it was online it would be unstoppable.

It's like welcoming an old friend home. He's been away for a while, he's wearing fancy-dan new clothes, but underneath he's still the same. It's a relief, but it's also the only thing holding Double Dash!! back – after ten years in the wilderness we shouldn't just be welcoming back the original but enjoying all the new additions.

Still, we're so happy to have Mario Kart back we've been holding a daily party, clustered around the GameCube and delighting in his company. That's the magic of Mario Kart.

MULTIPLAYER MAGIC

The original Mario Kart on Super Nintendo revolutionised multiplayer gaming – it really was that good. Gawd bless Nintendo, cos they've gone and done it again. Our lunch break just got longer...

Make the Grand Prix mode even more competitive by racing against mates!

One of the greatest multiplayer games ever made - balloon battle mode!

Bob-omb battle is a new mode where players lob bombs at each other!

Our fave is Shine Thief - try and hold the Shine until the time's up!

YOU THROW LIKE A GIRL-AH! BETCHA CAN'T EVEN HIT PAGE 98 FROM HERE!

GAMES VERDICT

Exquisite! Delivers a gaming experience so pure we're worried we might overdose. If all games were this much fun to play the world would be a happier, more beautiful place. **Graeme**

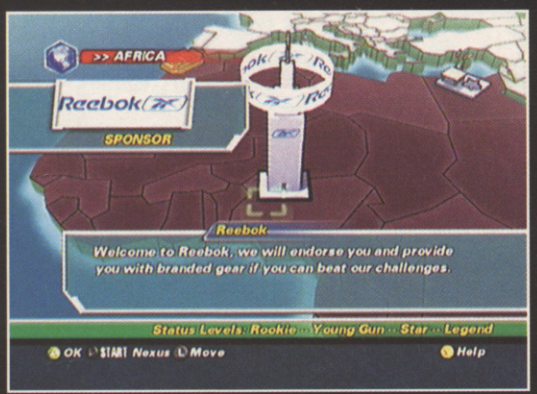
+ Rammed with personality
+ Multiplayer perfection
+ Ridiculously good fun

− Okay, so it's more of a 'return to form', than a full-on evolution for the series
− We're not getting any freakin' work done

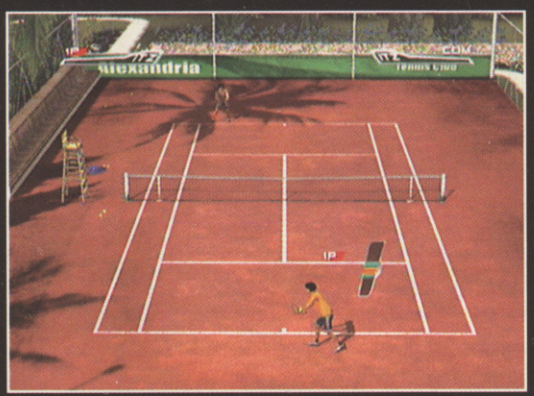
9 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... F-Zero GX (GC), Crash Nitro Kart (PS2)

TOP SPIN™



If you want the best threads, you'll need to impress your sponsors



That mini-Flake is the meter for the risk shots, done to perfection here

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS DEV: PAM
WWW.XBOX.COM
REVIEWED ON XBOX

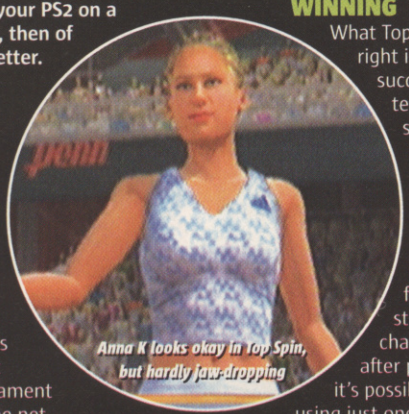
REMEMBER VIRTUA TENNIS? LIKE THAT, BUT WITH A LOAD OF XBOX LOVIN'

Are sports games better than the real thing? We're betting David Beckham doesn't think so, but if you're gasping round Hackney Marshes wishing you were still in bed with your PS2 on a Sunday morning, then of course they're better.

Take the gloriously unpredictable rallies of Virtua Tennis, for example. Many games firms have tried to scale Virtua's giddy heights, with both Next Generation Tennis and Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament slamming into the net.

And then someone came up with the cunning idea of making a game just like Virtua Tennis, even down to imitating the Career mode and bolstering it with near-photorealisitc graphics and a full rankings-based online community.

SWING WHEN YOU'RE WINNING

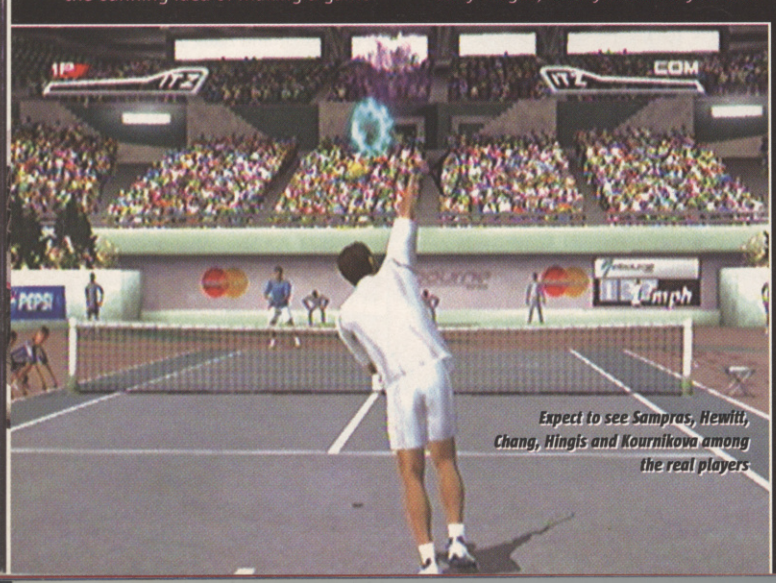


Anna K looks okay in Top Spin, but hardly jaw-dropping

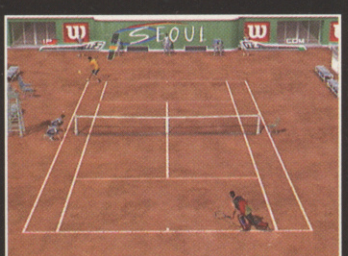
What Top Spin does so right is realise that a successful arcade tennis game should be as accessible as Pong, but with deeper levels of control woven in, so tour veterans feel like they're still getting a challenge weeks after playing. In fact it's possible to start off using just one button and busk it through the matches in the early stages, but by the time you face a tough player you'll need mastery of many shots – just like Virtua Tennis.

Shots like the forehand and backhand return use the face buttons – and with minimal risk. So-called risk shots, like the first serve, drop shot and top spin return are performed using a swinging gauge controlled with the shoulder triggers. This can be a bummer, since the tiniest bit of bad timing on these results in a fluffed shot. Maybe that's why they call it a risk shot...

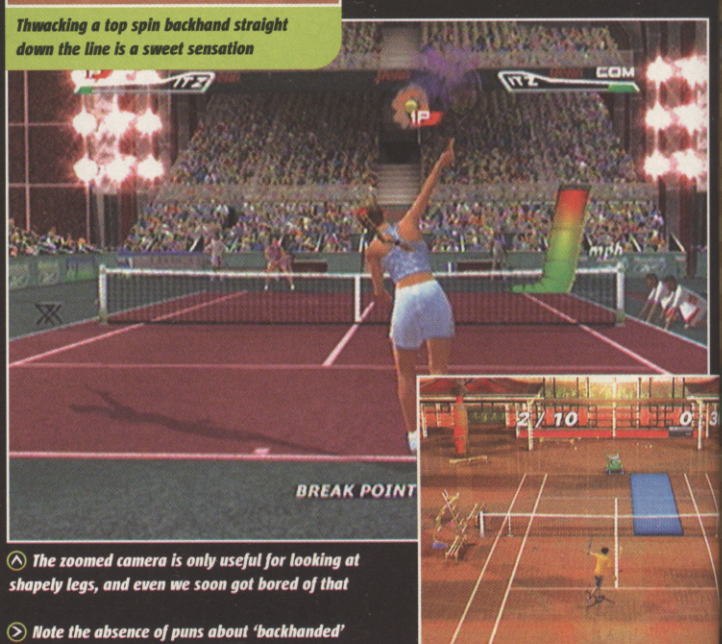
However, the genius element is a meter that fills each time you successfully pull off a risk shot. The fuller it is, the easier it is to play one, so you're always encouraged to take a chance. This creates real tension, especially in multiplayer when an opponent has their back to the wall. With online tournaments too, this whole package really is the ultimate next-gen console tennis game.



Expect to see Sampras, Hewitt, Chang, Hingis and Kournikova among the real players



Thwacking a top spin backhand straight down the line is a sweet sensation



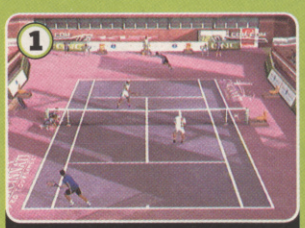
The zoomed camera is only useful for looking at shapely legs, and even we soon got bored of that

Note the absence of puns about 'backhanded' compliments. Or how much we 'love' the game

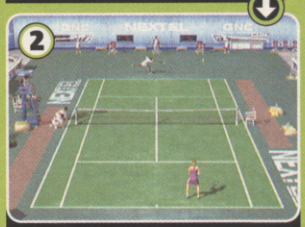
EAT CHALK DUST

What's so exciting about the XSN Sports and Xbox Live part of Top Spin is that players can organise their own online tournaments and competitions, or take part in ones hosted by XSN or Xbox Live bigwigs themselves.

And, who knows, if you're a Top Spin fancy-dan, you might eventually be taking part in competitions that bag you money and free stuff. Say hello to the future of sports games.



The idea of four-way Net play gets us moist like a day at Wimbledon



Build a rep for being a Top Spin god. Think of the rispeck on the streets

computer and video games VERDICT

Top Spin on Xbox is a brilliantly conceived game that looks and plays like a dream. Played on Xbox Live with XSN Sports compatibility it's something EVEN better. **Martian**

- This looks so realistic it's almost spooky
- Easy to pick up and play, but has hidden depth
- The online aspect adds loads of replay value

- The risk shots are sometimes too risky
- The loading times are sluggish and frequent

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... Virtua Tennis (Dreamcast)

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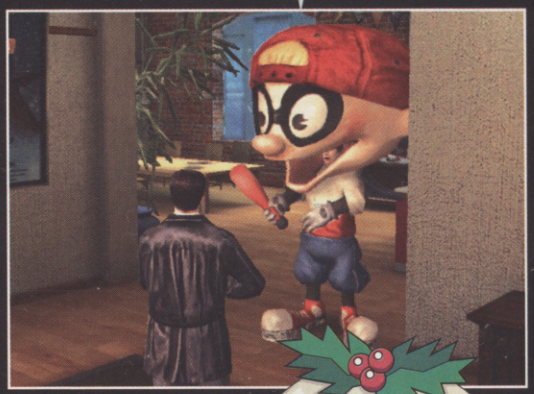
MAX PAYNE 2

THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW | COST: £34.99 | PLAYERS: 1 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: ROCKSTAR GAMES | DEV: REMEDY | WWW.MAXPAYNE2.COM | REVIEWED ON PC CD ROM



"Did somebody call for a bloke dressed up as a giant kid holding a baseball bat?"

XMAS ESSENTIAL

SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING, IN FACT THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE COME IN SMALL PACKAGES: KYLIE MINOGUE, DANNII MINOGUE, ERM... MAX PAYNE 2

It was one of the coolest games of all time, with its innovative slow-mo Bullet Time and film noir backdrop. The only problem with the first Max Payne was that it only took a day or so to complete. Admittedly it was pretty riveting, but a lot of you might think that six or seven hours is still a pretty poor return for the best part of 35 quid.

Well, it's back and, guess what? The sequel's at least as short as the last game, and possibly a teeny bit shorter. If you're good with a gun, you'll get six hours from start to finish. That's the bad news. The flipside is that every single bit of the game has been buffed and polished, tweaked and fiddled with to the point that it's now better than sex. Well...

STOP! BULLET TIME!

Bullet Time's still the gimmick that makes it all happen. It's essentially the same as in number one, but with a few crucial changes. For starters, you can use Shot Dodge (the slow-mo dives) as often as you like without eating into your precious Bullet Time (the hourglass in the bottom left of the screen). Bullet Time itself plunges the game into a sepia-like colour and essentially just slows the action down, and adds some funky new effects such as the rapid Matrix-style reload sequence. Take out a few people in one Bullet Time sitting and you'll enter 'The Zone' where things slow down even further giving you a greater edge over the bad guys. And, as you'd expect, the clipping problems that plagued the original have been eradicated so you don't end up shoulder deep in walls and doors. It might not add up to a complete overhaul but it plays like a dream.

Shot Dodge as much as you want without dipping into your Bullet Time. Nice

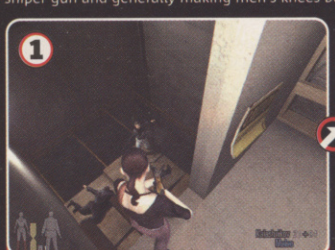
Snipe someone and you move into bullet-cam territory slamming towards your target's face

Certain deaths trigger amazing effects. Stuff that up your John Woo and smoke it!

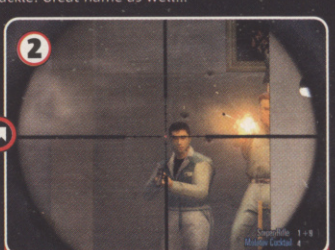
PLAYING THE SAX

Mona Sax is one tough chick. Sidekick, love interest and all-round distressed-denim sexpot, Mona is probably the coolest female character that's packed a gun.

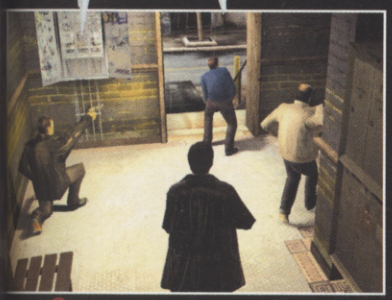
Fortunately, you actually get to play a few levels as Mona, protecting Max with your sniper gun and generally making men's knees buckle. Great name as well...



Look, we know she's just a game character, but she's hot and a crack shot, and she wears cool jeans. Yes, we're sad...



The first time you get to control Mona you're running round with a sniper rifle and it's one of the best levels in the game



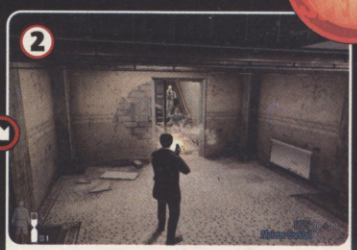
"Go on lads, get on in there. I'm going to be right behind you."

CALL THE UNDERTAKER

There's no multiplayer in Max Payne 2 but there is a sort of single-player equivalent. Finish the game (and you will, in about six hours blah blah) and you unlock two new modes, including the New York Minute from the original.

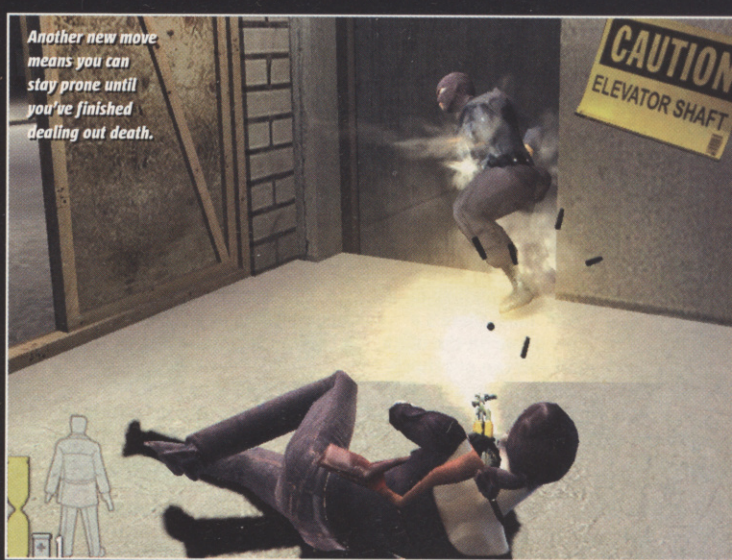
Complete the hardest of these and you unlock Dead Man Walking, an awesome extra, which puts you on a suicide mission. Every few seconds an enemy spawns, along with a bit of health. How long can you last before you become the dead man?

If it's fast, relentless ass-cappin' you're after, look no further than Dead Man Walking

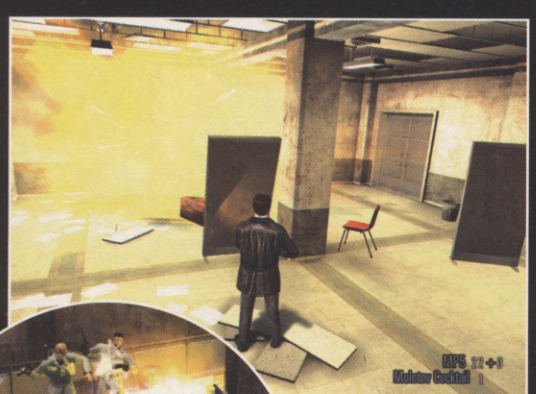


Enemies pour in faster than you can put them down, so make sure your aim is hot

Save Bullet Time for this when you're outnumbered

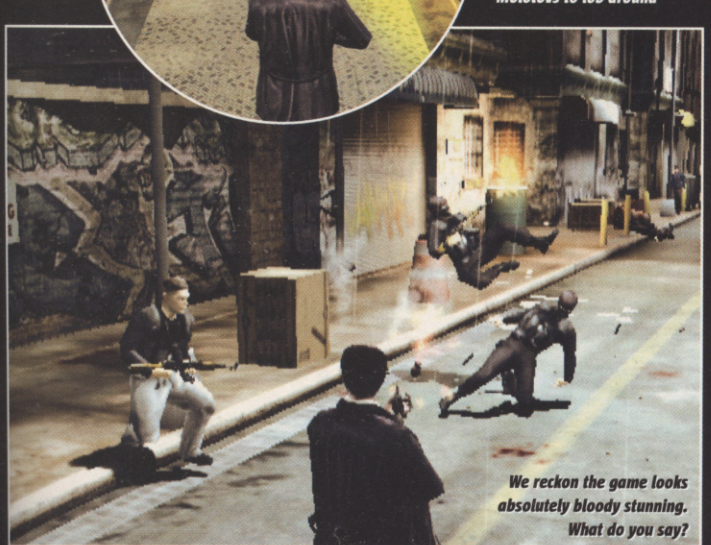


Another new move means you can stay prone until you've finished dealing out death.

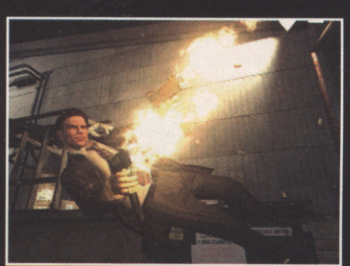


Kaboom! The explosives in the game show off the flash new physics engine

Hurrah! We've got plenty of flaming Molotovs to lob around



We reckon the game looks absolutely bloody stunning. What do you say?



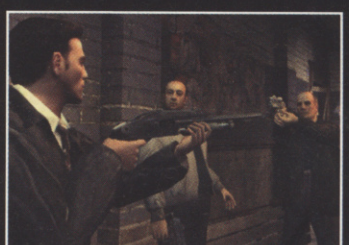
Our designer Jenny reckons Max looks like Coronation Street serial killer Richard here

Explosions in the game look absolutely amazing. The babes look pretty cool, too

WHAT GOES UP...

Add this to the brand new Havok 2 physics engine (that was supposed to make its first appearance in Half-Life 2 before it slipped) and you've got one of the best killing fields ever. Pretty much every object in the game acts as you'd expect in the real world – limbs buckle, paint pots fly off the wall, bodies arc through the air in graceful flight and boxes you'd been using for cover a few seconds earlier are blown away leaving you fully exposed to the relentless waves of gunmen all packing bullets with your name on. It's no exaggeration to say that when you're done you'll be happy to play through it all again. In fact the story is so complicated that you'll probably need a second viewing to grasp all the twists and turns. A real contender for PC game of the year. CVG

Every bullet is rendered in beautiful bullet-o-vision. Imagine this coming towards you at top speed – it looks amazing



We're thinking the guy in the middle looks a bit casual considering what's going down

GAMES VERDICT

Yep, it's way short, but this is quality not quantity. Get past the boring opening and Max Payne is a full-on bullet fest that will grip you by the throat and throttle the life out of you. **Dave**

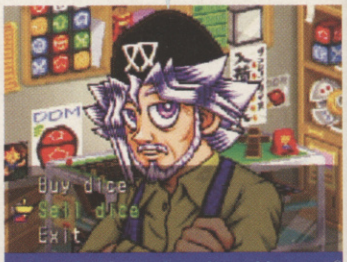
- Probably the bestest looking game ever
- Bullet Time is new and improved – suck on that, Keanu
- Better physics than they teach you at school
- Six hours? Just six hours? Look, we don't mind short, but...

9 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... True Crime (PS2, XB, GC)

Yu-Gi-Oh! DUNGEON DICE MONSTERS

The battle animations are hardly earth-shattering, but they do the job



Silver-haired Gramps here always drives a hard bargain when it comes to trading

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW COST: £29.99 PLAYERS: 1-2 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: KONAMI DEV: KONAMI | WWW.KONAMI.COM/DUNGEONDICE/ | REVIEWED ON GAME BOY ADVANCE

KONAMI FINGERS YOUR POCKET WITH DUNGEONS, DRAGONS AND DICE

Calling all Yu-Gi-Oh! fans: there's a new game on the block, and you can put those cards away cos this one's all about taking your chances with the dice.

Dungeon Dice Monsters matches take place on a grid, with you at one end and your opponent at the other.

KEEP ROLLIN' ROLLIN'

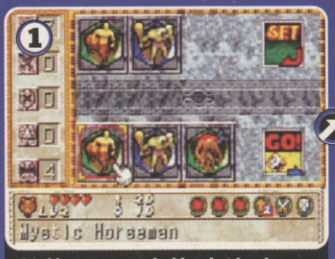
The object of the game is to build paths across the board, rolling dice to summon monsters and battle your opponent's as you go (see Summoning Monsters boxout). Win the match and you'll be rewarded with a new die for your collection.

This might not sound complicated, but it is – to begin with anyway. You're likely to spend the first 20 minutes checking the manual and cursing the developers for neglecting to throw in a tutorial mode. But once you get the hang of it, DDM is more addictive than those reconstituted potato snacks that come in cardboard tubes.

The only downside is that your computer opponent can be incredibly dim – work out a few strategies and you'll soon be winning pretty much every match. You'll need to add a mate, a link cable and another cartridge for a real challenge. But all things considered, if you like strategy games and don't mind a bit of a steep learning curve, this one's a winner.

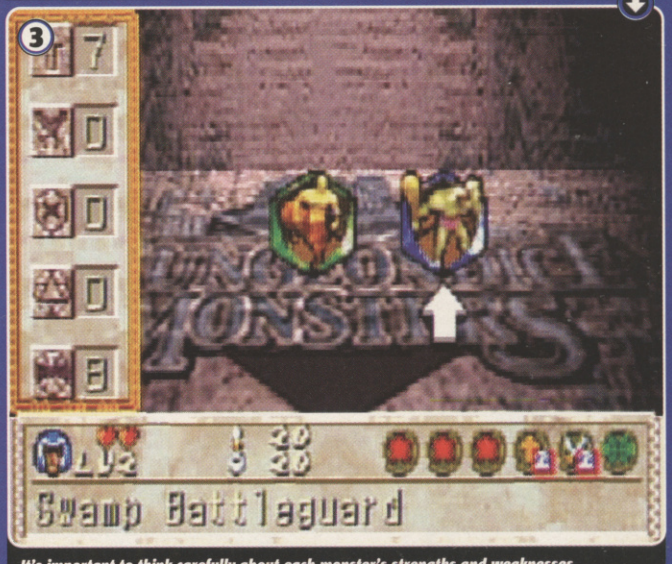
SUMMONING MONSTERS: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

Here's the briefest guide to get you on your way in the often painful world of DDM...



On this screen you decide what level of monster you want to summon and pick the right dice for the job

The dice feature crests instead of numbers, and you need to roll at least two star crests to summon



It's important to think carefully about each monster's strengths and weaknesses

Decide where you want to place your monster on the grid and then what shape path you want to lay

You can now move your monster or put it on the attack, as long as you've collected enough of the relevant crests. See, easy!

There are more than 100 different dice to collect

Try taking on enemies in the game's Free Duel mode to win extra dice

GAMES VERDICT

Worth buying if you're a fan of Yu-Gi-Oh!, Pokémon or, er, Yahtzee. And even if you're not, give it a go – you might find yourself an addict before the week is out. **Ellie**

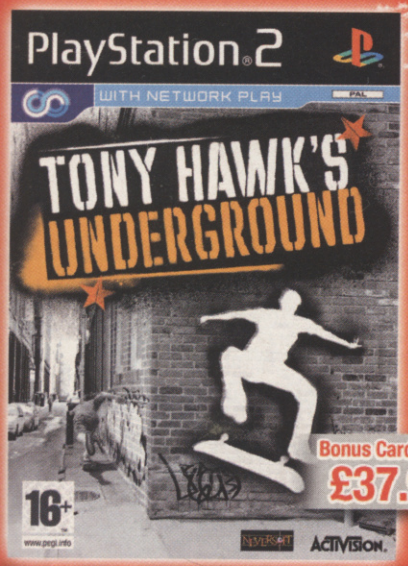
- ■ Addictive gameplay with decent replay value
- ■ Great fun if you've got a friend and a link cable
- ■ No sign of that annoying little Pikachu fella

- ■ Computer opponent is stupid
- ■ Why no tutorial? Manuals are so last century
- ■ Not enough chances to save in tournaments

7 OUT OF TEN

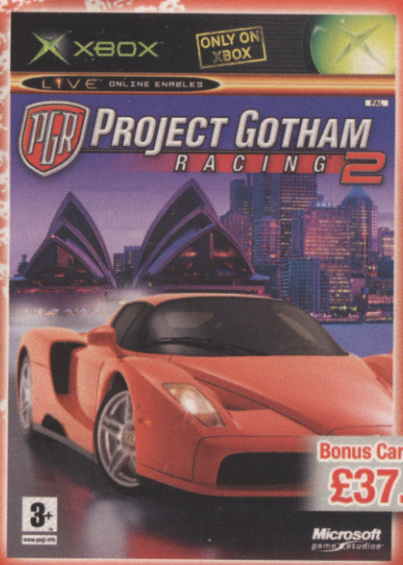
IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... ■ Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition (GBA)

Make us your first stop for games this Christmas

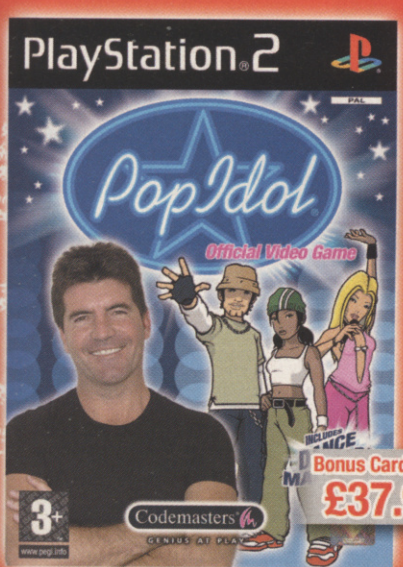


Tony Hawk's Underground
PS2 Xbox Gamecube GBA

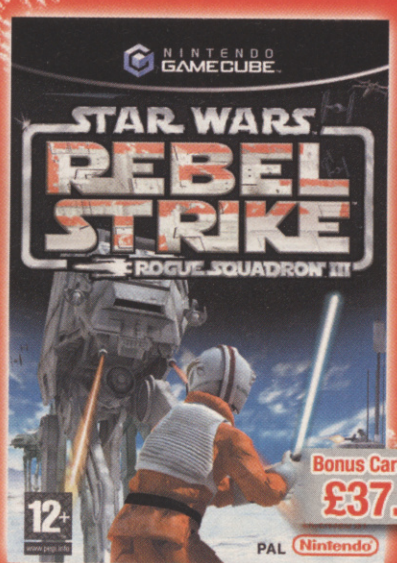
Mario Kart Double Dash
Gamecube



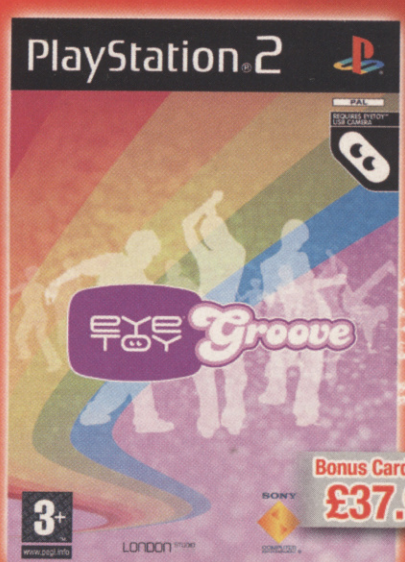
Project Gotham Racing
Xbox



Pop Idol
PS2 PC



Star Wars Rebel Strike Rogue Squadron III
Gamecube



Eye Toy Groove
PS2

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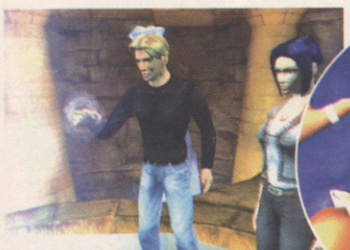
BROKEN SWORD

THE SLEEPING DRAGON



Now looking like a right fancy-dan in three dimensions, our hero George gets a shock

Believe it or not, this clairvoyant has just been handed a dirty pair of pants

Give this lightweight Aussie tourist a weak Castlemaine XXXX to solve this simple puzzle

GAME INFO

OUT: NOW COST: £34.99 PLAYERS: 1

ONLINE GAMING

PUB: THQ DEV: REVOLUTION

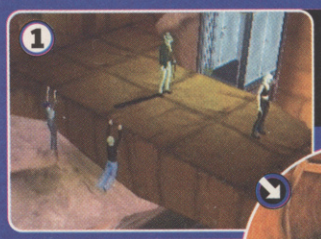
WWW.BROKENSWORDGAME.COM

REVIEWED ON PS2

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

As well as the more traditional puzzles and exploration, there is the occasional 'action' scene to enjoy.

Whether it's leaping into a Jeep or hitting an aggressor with a frying pan, only quick reactions with your gamepad will save you from impending doom.

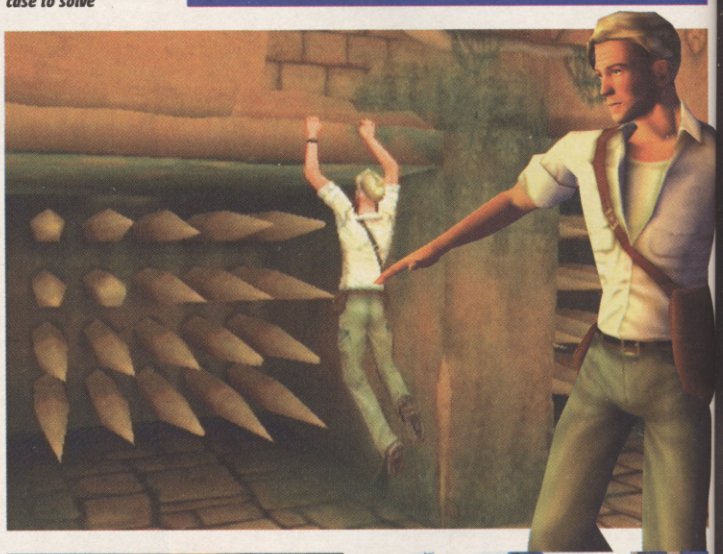


Hang George over the side of the bridge to hide from the baddies...

Oops, too late! I knew I shouldn't have had that extra doughnut for lunch...

Then sprint clear before they can put a bullet in you. Be quick. Unlike other BS games you control George yourself

Quit hanging around, there's a case to solve



THE LEGENDARY POINT-AND-CLICKER HITS 3D CONSOLE TOWN

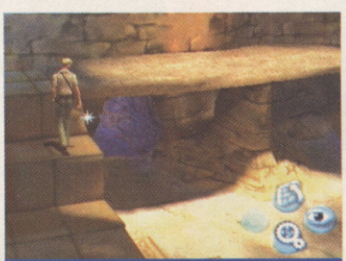
You might not remember those crusty old point-and-click adventures. They were the perfect fodder for anyone fancying a bit of moustache-twitching sleuthing, rather than blasting holes in the next alien scumbag to spill your milk.

Rising out of that genre's ashes is the legendary Broken Sword series. Inevitably, this third supernatural mystery has received a bit of a tinkering, with new 3D environments and gamepad-operated characters, but still manages to play like every other point-and-clicker in the traditional sense. Performing actions is activated by a four-prong interface in the corner of the screen, with flashing icons letting you know whenever you can interact with an object.

Nico clearly has been playing way too much Tomb Raider

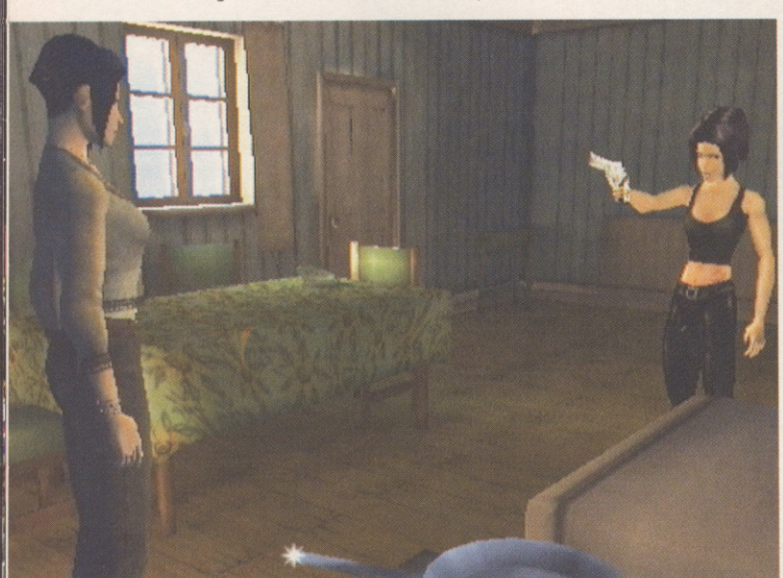
SLEEPING DRAGONS, EQUALLY DOZING GAMERS

The adventure's main downfall is that it doesn't make you feel that involved. Talking to non-playable characters is a dull case of wading through a load of pre-written conversations, and the bustling streets of Paris and Glastonbury have been condensed into tiny communities of one-dimensional characters. 'Is this really a game at all?' some of you will no doubt scream in complete boredom.



Icons in the corner let you know helpfully what you can do with certain items

Believe it or not, this is Glastonbury. Wait around and maybe Radiohead will come on



Nico is confronted by... um... herself. Don't say we didn't warn you. It starts to get really weird

But it gets better. Somehow, some way, the lead duo of George and Nico become your new best mates. Curiosity begins to take a grip and you'll find yourself sneaking back to the tale, desperate to discover just how Nico slips her attackers in a Parisian theatre, or why that pale-faced loon Susarro wants the Key of Solomon. Even the puzzles start to offer a challenge, without being so obscure that you end up destroying your console in fits of rage.

Playing The Sleeping Dragon is like reading a good book. It's like Tomb Raider without the combat but with a plot that's jam-packed with nervy cliffhangers at every twist and turn. You'll certainly need an open mind to get stuck in, but you never know, you might just be surprised with what it has to offer.

computer and video games VERDICT

This is the place where books and games meet. Very slow and only worth an investigation if you're willing to try something completely different. **Stephen 'Blame the Incas' Daultrey**

- Excellent storyline teeming with mystery
- And the voice-acting is pretty good too
- Keeps frustration to a minimum
- But it's all so very, very slow
- And you don't feel part of the action either
- Puzzles are too obvious at the beginning

6 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... Escape From Monkey Island (PS2)

Tom Clancy's RAINBOW SIX 3

KILL TERRORISTS. FIND POT OF GOLD. OUR KIND OF RAINBOW

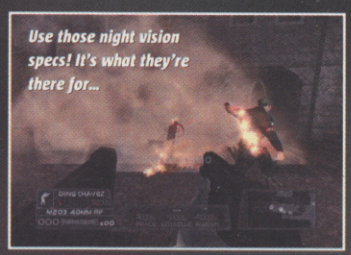
A PS2 version is likely once the Xbox exclusivity period is done

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW | COST: £39.99 / £49.99 WITH HEADSET | PLAYERS: 1-32 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: UBI SOFT | DEV: UBI SOFT / RED STORM | WWW.RAINBOWSIX3.COM | REVIEWED ON: XBOX

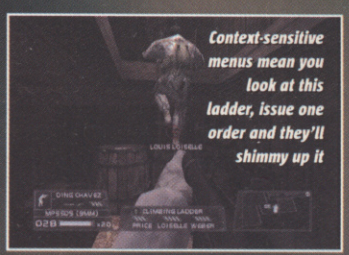
Last time someone gave us a set of night vision goggles, three CVGers spent a night in a stir explaining to Inspector Knacker how you *have* to hide in bushes when bird-watching, and what an amazing coincidence it was that an incredibly rare owl was perched near Kylie Minogue's bedroom window. All night.

Perhaps we should've stuck to what see-in-the-dark technology is really meant for: killing people. Because that's how you use night vision when you join elite anti-terrorist team Rainbow. Though at least you do get to travel the world, having a go with it in airports, castles and snowy villages. Oh, and you save everyone from Doomsday while you're there.

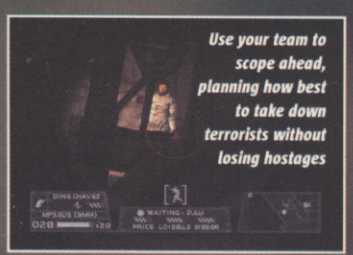
The Rainbow Six series isn't new to console, but it's the first since PSone. And while it is a stealthy Tom Clancy game, it's about being a team player like recent offshoot Ghost Recon, not Splinter Cell solo heroics.



Use those night vision specs! It's what they're there for...



Context-sensitive menus mean you look at this ladder, issue one order and they'll shimmy up it



Use your team to scope ahead, planning how best to take down terrorists without losing hostages

PAINT THE WHOLE WORLD...

You'll recognise tasty features like the context-sensitive squad command menus enabling quick selection of orders, the ability to lever open doors an inch at a time to lob grenades in, plus many of the cool weapons, gadgets and even some locations from last year's PC classic R63: Raven Shield.

But for Xbox R63 adapts much of what it borrows, making it far less punishing to get into. Our fave new feature has to be voice command, which makes controlling your team easy, allowing you to concentrate on field strategies and soak up the atmosphere.

Being squad-based, you must learn to be a competent commander as well as fighter, and after getting to grips with the control basics in training, R63's missions ease you nicely into trying increasingly clever team manoeuvres like laying down suppressing fire, distraction attacks and ambushes.

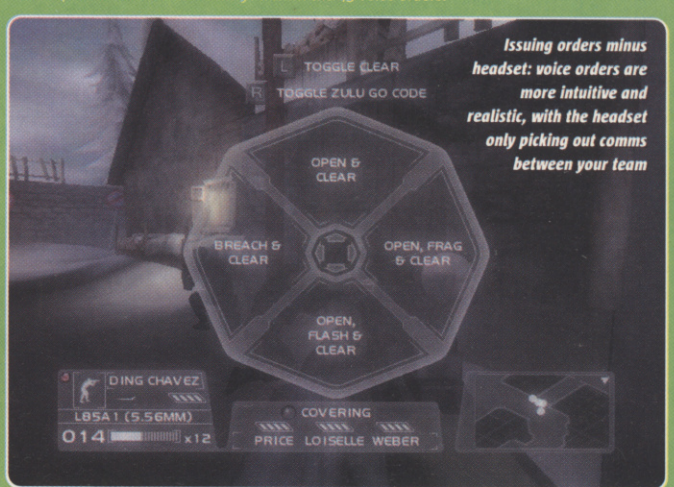
...WITH A RAINBOW!

Successfully planning and executing this is where much of the reward is to be had in R63, either offline or online with teams of other players in both head-to-head and co-op. It's no coincidence that you can't run, lie prone or jump and you can't split your team up – R63 isn't meant to be ultra realistic, more a nice-looking and fun squad-based shooter, and it pulls this off.

The tactical focus won't be to everyone's taste, and the package wouldn't stand out half as much if you don't have Live or use a headset. We could nit-pick about occasional AI blips or that the voice recognition didn't work 100 per cent of the time, but the fact is Rainbow Six 3 is highly addictive, paying off the time you invest in it. Own an Xbox? Into shooters? Get this.

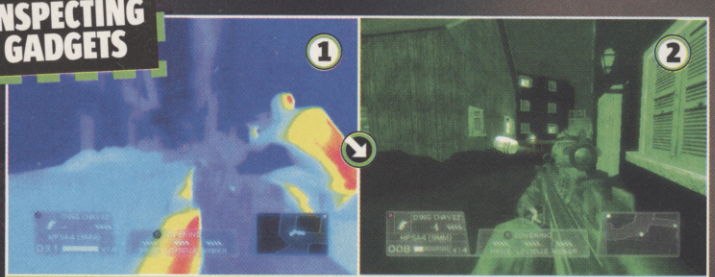
LUDDITE TENDENCIES

If you don't have a headset or are too lame, er, traditional, to shout commands, then order your team around old-stylee. Point at your chosen location or interactive object, hit one button, up pops the squad menu and the direction pad lets you select your command. It's pretty fast but does spoil the atmosphere a bit, though it's initially useful as a reminder for which options are available while you learn the 45 voice orders.



Issuing orders minus headset: voice orders are more intuitive and realistic, with the headset only picking out comms between your team

INSPECTING GADGETS



As Sam Fisher proved, no new Tom Clancy game would be complete without a full set of meaty guns and war gadgets like thermal...

...and night vision with which to bamboozle terrorist nutters, save the world and find the toilet at 3am without tripping over your cat

computer and video games VERDICT

An addictive, golden gaming nugget and the best tactical shooter out on console right now. It might even tempt you to go out and buy a Live starter pack. **Pete**

- Voice comms make controlling a squad fun
- Comprehensive Live package = lots of replay
- Lighting effects purdy as a rainbow

- Xbox only... for now, anyway
- Best with Live and a headset = more £££
- No split-screen multiplayer

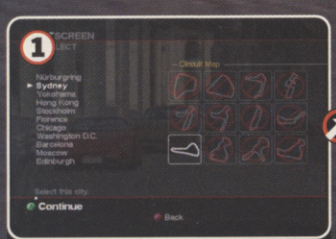
8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Hidden & Dangerous 2 (PC) ■ SWAT: GST (XB, PS2)

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION

Ever fancied buzzing the Kremlin, screeching through Sydney or pulling a wheelie skid outside the White House? Well, PGR2 gives you the chance to drive like you've had a plutonium enema through ten cities across the globe, each with up to 13 different tracks.



Multiplayer mode lets you choose the weather and time of day for each race

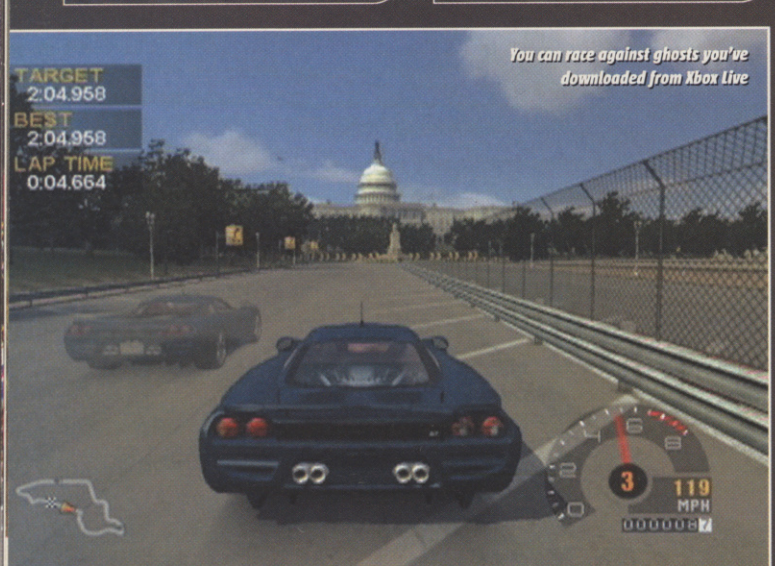
Here, we've picked a clear night in Hong Kong. Because you are God of Weather

Or a sweltering summer's day in Edinburgh. See, you really can pull off the impossible

Why not have a gloomy morning in Barcelona? The weather's gone crazy!

Ah, there's nothing like smashing a £360,000 car into a crash barrier

Link moves into combos to earn extra kudos points



You can race against ghosts you've downloaded from Xbox Live

GAME INFO OUT: NOVEMBER 28 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4
ONLINE GAMING
PUB: MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS DEV: BIZARRE CREATIONS
WWW.XBOX.COM/EN-GB/PROJECTGOTHAM2
REVIEWED ON XBOX

LAST YEAR'S STREET RACING DADDY ROARS BACK FOR A SECOND LAP AROUND THE BOX

Prepare to start your engines, burn some rubber and laugh in the face of the Highway Code all over again – Project Gotham 2 is finally here. Fans of the first game have been clamouring for a sequel ever since Xbox launched. But with the likes of EA's Need For Speed Underground lining up on the starting grid, the competition looks a little tougher these days. So in the battle to be the number one Xbox racer, can PGR2 take pole position?

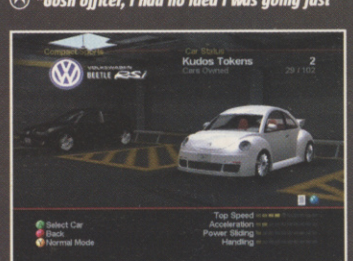
DRIVE TIME

The game certainly has what it takes in the looks department – PGR2 is truly beautiful to behold. The backgrounds are incredibly detailed, the weather effects superb and the car reflections so realistic you keep expecting to see your face in them. And what a lot of cars there are – over 100, to be precise. From the Porsche Boxter and the Ferrari Enzo to the, er, Renault Clio (well, it's nippy round town), the finest selection of motors you've dreamed of driving are in here. With the possible exception of the van out of The A-Team.

Project Gotham's patented kudos system is still in place, so you're rewarded for how you drive and not just how fast. You'll need to pull off plenty of power slides, jumps and wheelies to earn a high ranking. It's fun but it's nothing new, and unless you've got Xbox Live (which allows for a thrilling and lag-free online experience), playing PGR2 can be a bit like snogging your girlfriend's twin sister – enjoyable, exciting and satisfying, but ultimately it feels like you've been here before.

"Gosh officer, I had no idea I was going fast"

Call the Cones Hotline, they're taking over



See the cars close up in your garage

Games VERDICT

Online option aside, this sequel isn't a whole lot different to the first game. But if you're a PGR newbie or hardcore petrolhead, it's sure to get your motor running. **Ellie**

- Loads of cars and cities to race round
- Kudos system makes for in-depth gameplay
- Nicely detailed environments
- Not much has changed from the first game
- You'll get more from it with online access
- Difficulty curve too steep for novice racers?

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... NFS Underground (PC, PS2, XB) GT3 (PS2)

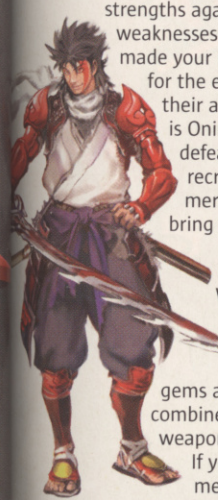
鬼武者 Onimusha Tactics

Q: AGES ON THE BOG? WHY? A: YOU'VE BEEN SHAKING YOUR TACTICS ON GBA!

GAME INFO | OUT: NOW | COST: £29.99 | PLAYERS: 1 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: CAPCOM | DEV: CAPCOM | WWW.CAPCOM.COM | REVIEWED ON GAME BOY ADVANCE

So, you've played Advance Wars till your brain hurt. You've caned Advance Wars 2 and you've thrashed Final Fantasy Tactics Advance into the wee small hours, but you've STILL got a strategy bug biting your skinny ass. What do you do? You buy this, oh yes you do.

Basically a cross between Pokémon and, er, chess, Onimusha Tactics sees you moving pieces around the board then pitching them against your enemies, hopefully playing your strengths against their weaknesses. Once you've made your move, it's time for the enemy to launch their attack. Your lead piece is Onimaru, a warrior sworn to defeat the evil Genma army, who recruits a selection of warriors, mercenaries and passers-by to bring peace to his troubled land.



CORPSES MEAN PRIZES

With each battle you gain experience and skills, while the unlucky blokes you slaughter will release gems and souls that can be combined to enhance current weapons and create new ones. If you lose a battle, a fiddly menu will help you regroup and re-arm before heading back into combat. This is where you'll either love this game or hate it. Mastering how to train and command your army can be time-consuming, but, worse, frustrating, especially when some of your characters seemingly refuse to improve their skills while others appear to be on steroids. However, the 40-odd terrains, including a trip to Hell itself, are so imaginatively designed and beautifully executed that it's well worth sticking with Tactics.

By the looks of things you're commanding an army of obese midgets

A likely band of heroes to pitch cruelly into battle

Careful: all this gut-wrenching strategy and stomach-churning tactics can be too much for some

This actress has more fans on stage than in the audience. Uh-oh!

These guys are saying, "What do we do now, boss?" And they're talking to you

What Oboro wanted was a Gucci clutch bag. What she got was... herb

Herb was combined for purely medicinal purposes, of course

The sworn enemy of the people! Kill him up good

RAIN DEATH FROM ABOVE! (AND OTHER TACTICS)

Planning your battle takes thought (but it's worth it, trust us). Characters move with different speeds and have different ranges, so send some characters into battle and use others for covering fire...

1 Tsubame slices out mercilessly at an enemy Jorda

2 Position Hanpeita high up and he's wicked with the longbow

4 Bomaru can grease two guys at once with his spear

3 Special characters can dish out huge mega-hits

5 And another enemy bites the dust. Suck his soul!

GamesTM VERDICT

If you crave the instant high of a beat 'em up, this probably ain't for you. But if you're willing to put in the time and effort, you'll discover a brilliant, hugely addictive game. Gavin

- (+) Infuriatingly addictive game play requiring strategy not button bashing
- (+) Cute graphics and imaginative animations
- (−) Demands a substantial commitment to perfect your fighting techniques
- (−) Clunky cutscenes and lengthy dialogue

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... ■ Final Fantasy Tactics (GBA), ■ Advance Wars (GBA)

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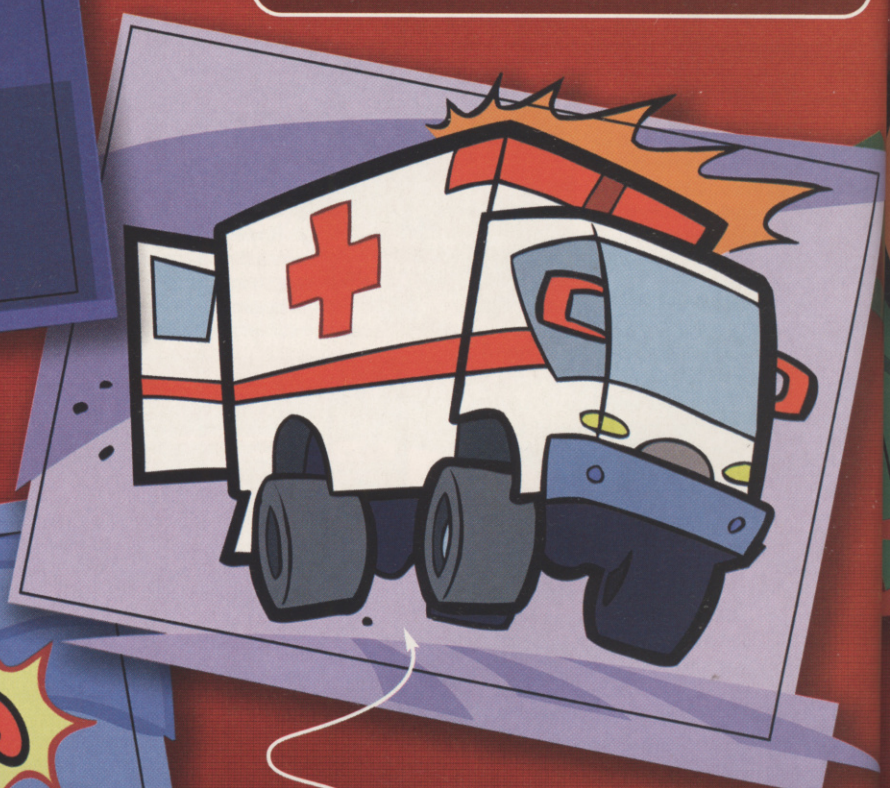

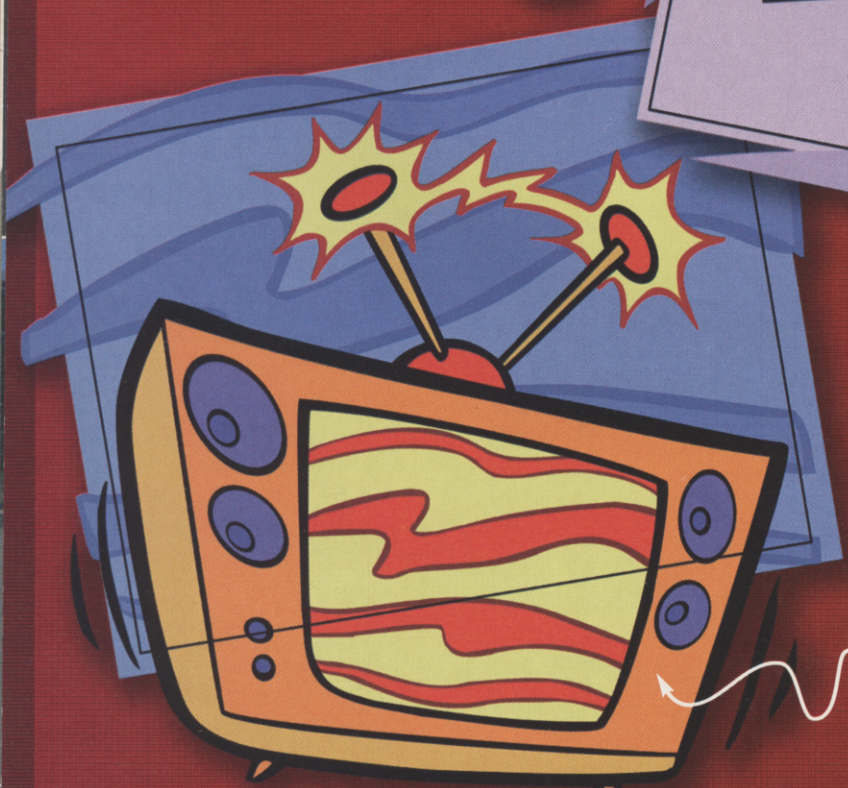

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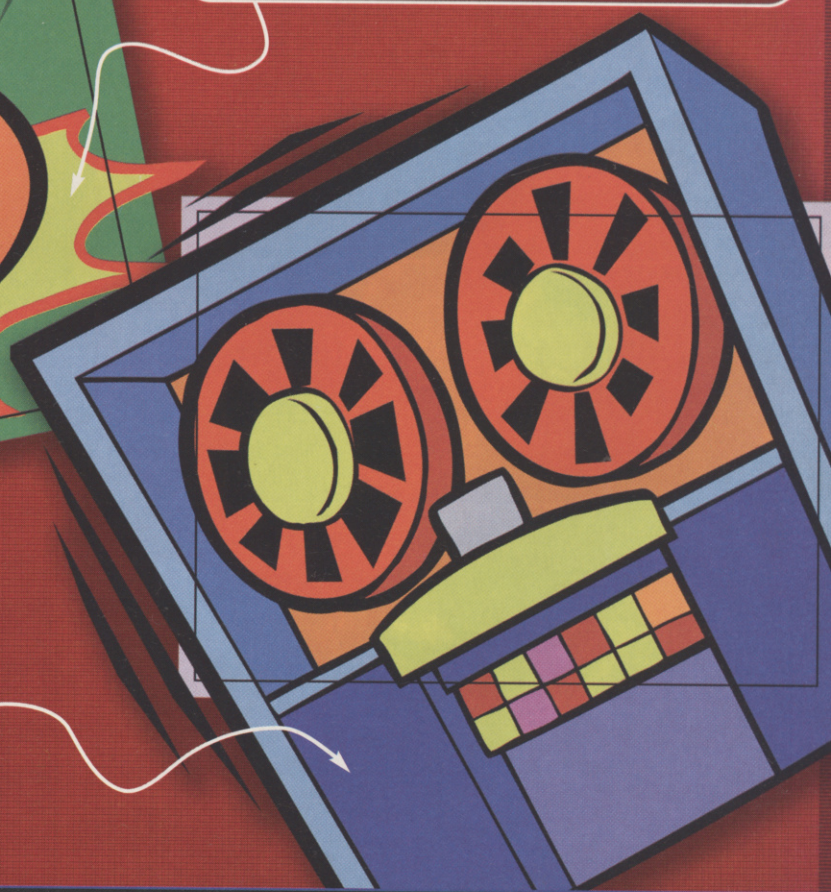

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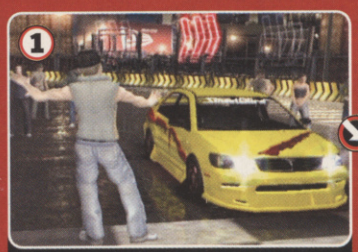
DRIFTING AWAY

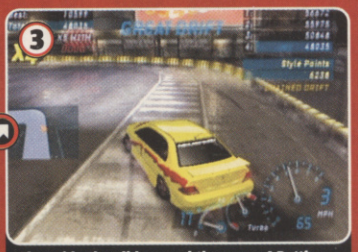
In Need For Speed Underground, drag racing is all about speed, but drift racing is about style. Plus, it's the hottest thing happening in Japan's car culture right now. Get your car sideways and drift smoothly through the corners looking chic. But don't hit the walls or you'll look like a right rookie.

XMAS ESSENTIAL



Drift races take place down by the docks where the tarmac's always greasy

Get up some speed then throw the wheel round, counter-steering to fight the spin



Then ride the slide round the corner! Putting your tyres on the kerb nails bonus points

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

EA PUMPS A FULL CANISTER OF NITROUS OXIDE INTO THE STREET RACING GENRE

GAME INFO OUT: NOV 21 (PS2, GC, XB) NOV 28 (PC) COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4 ONLINE GAMING

PUB: EA DEV: BLACK BOX
WWW.NEEDFORSPEED.COM

REVIEWED ON: PS2

ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX, PC, CUBE

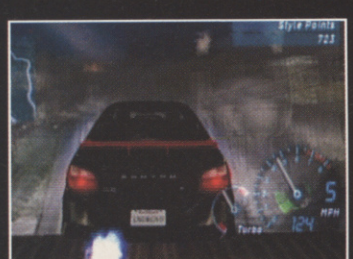
Every town has one. It might be the B&Q car park, or the Burger King drive-thru, or that quiet stretch of road down by the beach. It's the place where the boy racers go to cruise. Sounds cool, eh? Until you see that their 'phat ride' is actually their mum's rusting H-reg Fiesta.

SOUPED UP

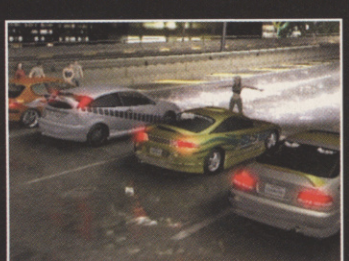
Anyway, go and check out your local spot. Trust us, it'll be deserted. The reason? Why bother freezing your ass off when you could be inside with the best street racing game ever?
Need for Speed Underground is the latest installment in EA's long-running series, but it's the first to focus on the illicit world of street racing. Midnight Club 2 beat them to it, but seriously, this makes Rockstar's ride look like a sputtering milk float.

TRICKED OUT

See, underground car culture is all about looking individual, and Midnight Club only let you change your car's colour. In Underground, however, the sheer depth of customisation options is like a trolley dash through Halford's. You decide whether you want a vibrant, glow-in-the-dark flying lump of fibreglass, or an understated, subtly-styled bat out of hell. It's almost as much fun as racing.
You can add performance enhancing

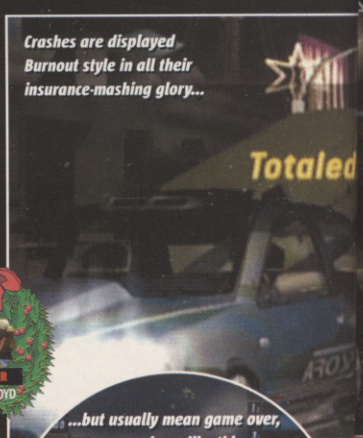


Fire off some nitro to get an extra bit of punch of the edge of this ramp. Wheeeee!

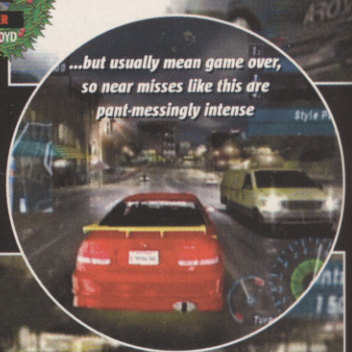


The atmosphere is fantastic – every race feels like a scene from The Fast and the Furious

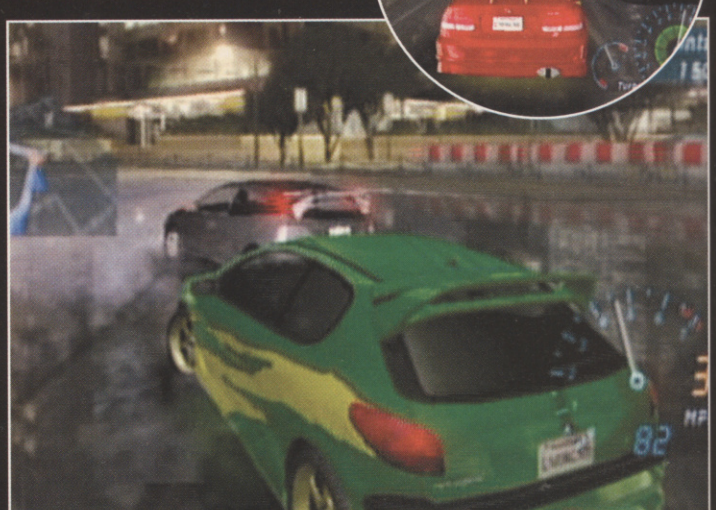
Make a name for yourself on the streets and eventually you'll end up on magazine covers



Crashes are displayed Burnout style in all their insurance-mashing glory...



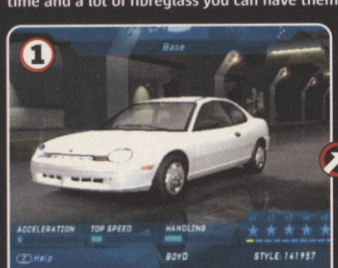
...but usually mean game over, so near misses like this are pant-messingly intense



Powerslides, drafting, jumps and shortcuts earn you style points that unlock new upgrades

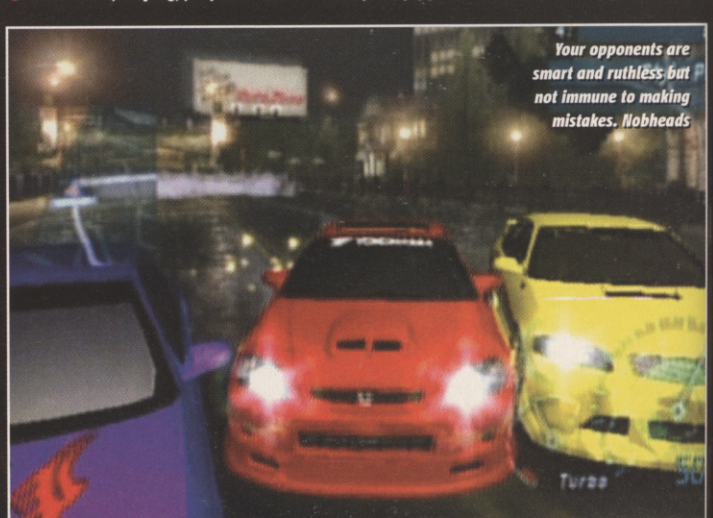
MUM'S MOTOR TO THE MAX

The cars in Underground begin life looking like your mum's motor, but with a little bit of time and a lot of fibreglass you can have them tricked out to the limit. Not so dull now, eh?

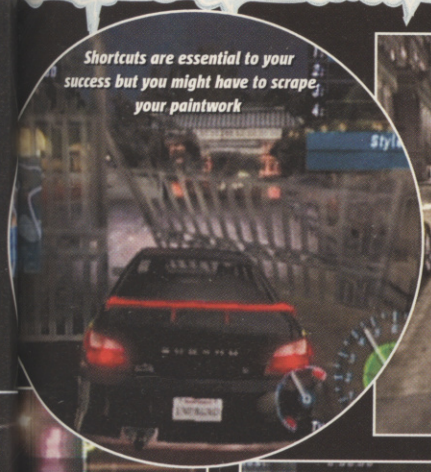


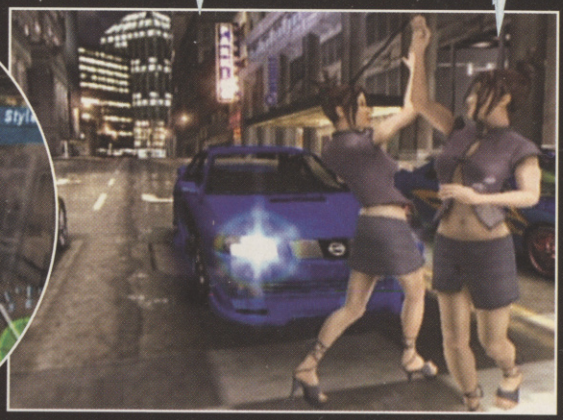
A lovely Dodge Neon, perfect for the school run and doing the shopping...

...to a throbbing beast with nitrous oxide for blood and a heart of pure power

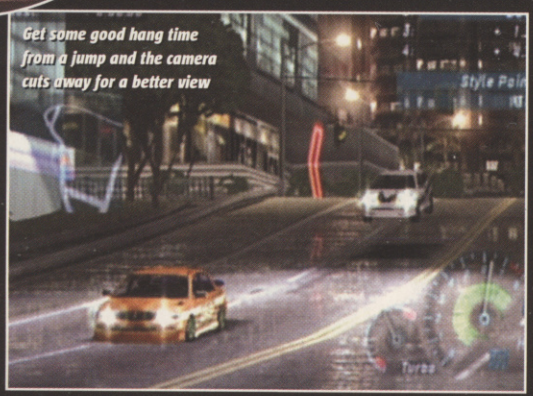


Your opponents are smart and ruthless but not immune to making mistakes. Nobheads


Shortcuts are essential to your success but you might have to scrape your paintwork


Twins in minis and tricked-out motors. Is there more to life?

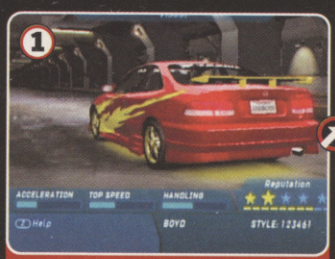
Shifting gear at the right time to get max pull is the secret of drag racing


Get some good hang time from a jump and the camera cuts away for a better view

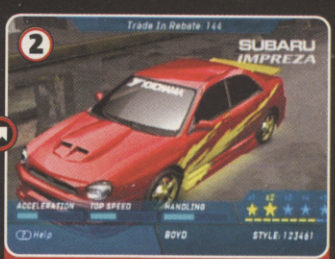
THE MOD SCENE

In last month's preview we showed you how easy it was to modify a production model into a lean, mean street machine.

Thankfully EA have made it even easier to trade in your motor and give it a makeover:



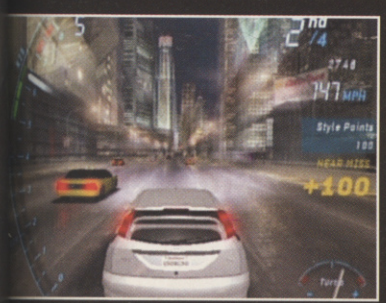
It's hard to say goodbye to our Civic. We love every last flimsy plastic bit



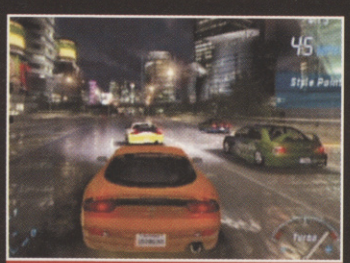
Sod it, let's trade it in for a Subaru Impreza! Extra HP and some cashback!

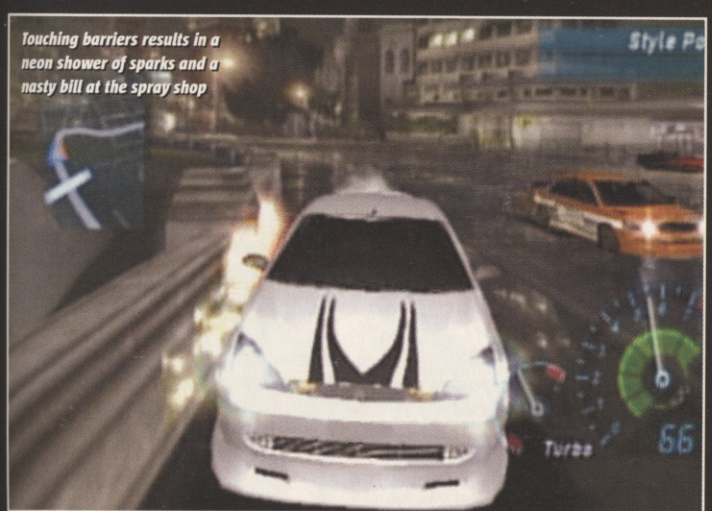
Then add a hideously over-the-top flash of colour. Max Power here we come!

Let's go for a subtle look. Black bodywork should look sweet on the midnight streets



Unleashing nitro boosts is way cool


The graphics are unbelievable, the soundtrack awesome. Underground has it all...



Touching barriers results in a neon shower of sparks and a nasty bill at the spray shop

Clipping traffic at high speed can send you into a vicious spin. At least it looks cool!

Unfortunately there's no replay mode. We could have watched these races all day!

kits, too, like turbos and suspension, but you needn't worry about tweaking gear ratios or camber heights – once you've installed a kit everything's done for you. It's a wicked way to balance the arcade-edged racing with a sense of street-level reality, especially since everything's licensed from some of the hottest names in car modding.

Once you've customised your motor you need to get out on the blacktop. Rarely is a game so powerfully overwhelming as NFS Underground. Every corner, every short cut, every car missed by a wing mirror's width, is a heart stopping experience in itself. It's almost heart-burstingly exciting, like clinging onto the roof of a turbo-charged hot hatch as it joyrides through rush hour traffic.

2 FAST 2 FURIOUS

Drag races are even more intense. Thirty seconds is a long time for anyone not to blink, but you better get used to it. Drift racing completes the modes, a fun departure where you have to lay down some of the sickest powerslides ever seen on tarmac.

Our only criticism would be that things do tend to get a bit repetitive. The tracks are cool, but you're mostly driving the same stretches. Also, the amazing graphics have a shiny sheen that sometimes obscures the horizon in a haze of silver.

But the whole thing is presented in such a fantastically cool and Turtle Wax-polished package that we don't mind. Need For Speed Underground is seriously mint. If you don't believe us, check with your local boy racers – if you can find them, that is.

computer and video games VERDICT

Screams so much quality it's like putting your ear against the exhaust of a turbo-charged Nissan Skyline. Furiously enjoyable and rules the streets as the definitive underground racer. **Graeme**

- Officially licensed cars and upgrades
- Sweet customisation option
- Produces enough adrenaline to kill a horse

- Repetitive tracks and locations
- Graphics tend to bleed together
- No replay mode

9 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... Midnight Club 2 (XB, PS2, PC)

amped 2

A BIT LIKE THE FIRST ONE – EXCEPT A WHOLE LOT BETTER

GAME INFO OUT: NOW COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-8
ONLINE GAMING * PUB: MICROSOFT * DEV: MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS * WWW.XBOX.COM
REVIEWED ON: XBOX

History tells us that snowboarding was once considered an 'extreme' sport. Yes, even though nobody ate their own vomit or fired rockets out their asses, people called it extreme. Pah! These days snowboarding makes golf look extreme, and the original snowboarding scene-setters are long gone, probably surfing down waterfalls on the back of digestive biscuits. Or something.

So, with that in mind, why do cutting edge console kids like us want to play Amped? Because mainstream approval does have its benefits, and Amped 2 is one of them, that's why. It's the sequel to the Xbox original, and it follows the rules that govern the making of successful sequels by giving us more of everything: more mountain, more game modes, more riders, more multiplayer, more control and, finally, Xbox Live goodness.

PLUMP 'N' LOVELY

The result is a game plumped with self-improvement though still filling its niche as the snowboarding game most like the real thing. You will not, we repeat, *not*, be pulling 5,000-degree spins or getting air for whole minutes at a time.

The action's centred on the Career mode, which

That little orange meter shows you're tricking with style

Getting a good launch is key to getting ahead

The snow is supremely realistic, so take a bow, Xbox snowmakers

Looks like this geezer's borrowed Uma Thurman's Kill Bill tracksuit. Don't blame him

The lighting really conveys the time of day

Is this a) a snowboarder; or b) a one-legged trapeze artist carrying a musical instrument?

The detail in the split-screen mode has had to be sacrificed for speed. Fair enough

The views on the way down are spectacular to say the least

The tutorial is totally condescending, but if you can stomach that it is fairly helpful

"SPREAD THE BUTTER!"

No, not a nonsensical statement but a clever reference to Amped 2's manualling set-up, which hilariously is called Butter.

By pressing up and down, or down or up you're able to link together tricks, but only if you can control the balance meter that accompanies you to the next tricking destination. Have a gander...

On the way out of a trick press up and down...

Now keep your balance on the way to that rail...

Bingo! We're racking up massive points

SNOW GOD

There are six mountains to explore in Amped 2, and one man is responsible for making sure it's time well spent. That man is Chris 'Gunny' Gunnarson.

Gunny designs snow parks at the world's hottest resorts, and he's created all the runs in Amped 2. And while many of the mountains in the game, like Mt Buller, are real, each have been tweaked to suit the armchair enthusiast. Thanks, Gunny.

Cheers, Mr Gunnarson, that sure is one fat chunk of mountain to love

Imagine the tricking possibilities on this short stretch of course

Every course has masses of different routes to get your teeth into. So get exploring...

Let's see if this bloke makes it to the bottom of the page

You have to be a real show-off to get ahead in Amped 2

Surely this isn't correct attire for snowboarding

Being upside down is a sure sign you're playing properly

Don't expect hyper-spaced stunts, okay? When you get air, you get it in real time

Pull off a one-footed nose slide and all the laydeez will be on your nutz. Perhaps

Well done! He's arrived safe and sound

Courses by Gunny, stunning natural scenery by the big fella

once again pits you as an amateur snowboarder high on the possibility of turning pro. For you the challenge is to impress the media with sick stunts, and cosy up to key sponsors by acting as their trick monkey.

The challenge of turning pro isn't made easy, with stiff tests to pass. However, controls are tight and a definite improvement. Success is as much to do with timing as it is pressing the right button, and central to the system is pre-winding the tricks by moving the left stick before takeoff. This determines whether you're going to flip or spin, and if you release the jump button at just the right time you'll be launched into the air performing your trick.

THE POSSIBILITIES

And here it gets interesting. There are three things that could happen at this point. You could spin wildly and fail to position your feet and bail. Or you could sort your feet and bag some points. Or you could relax, slowly release the left stick so it's half engaged and watch a meter appear and drench you with points as you rotate like you've got all the time in the world.

See, being a pro isn't all about how high, far or dangerous. It's about style and control, and that doesn't come straight away, but when it does, it feels sweet. This is a game where you're constantly looking to better your last run, to find a secret area and try a different combo. And luckily, this part is fun.

Like a Tony Hawk game, it's a giant work in progress, with loads of different single and multiplayer challenges to keep on the go. And in Amped 2's case, it's fully kitted out for Xbox Live. So if you have the long-term obsession needed to truly master this beast you'll find an absolutely essential winter playmate.

computer and video games VERDICT

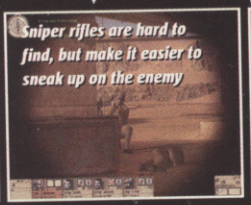
Without doubt one of the best-looking boarding games for quite some time, with massive replay value and superb Xbox Live features. If you like snowboarding you'll love it. **Martian**

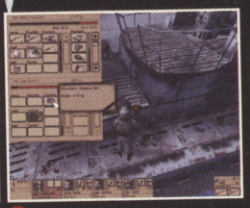
- The courses are extremely well put together
- Well balanced and responsive controls
- This game looks the business

- You'll be replaying bits over and over
- Some of the runs are a bit short
- Snowboarding – it's been done to death

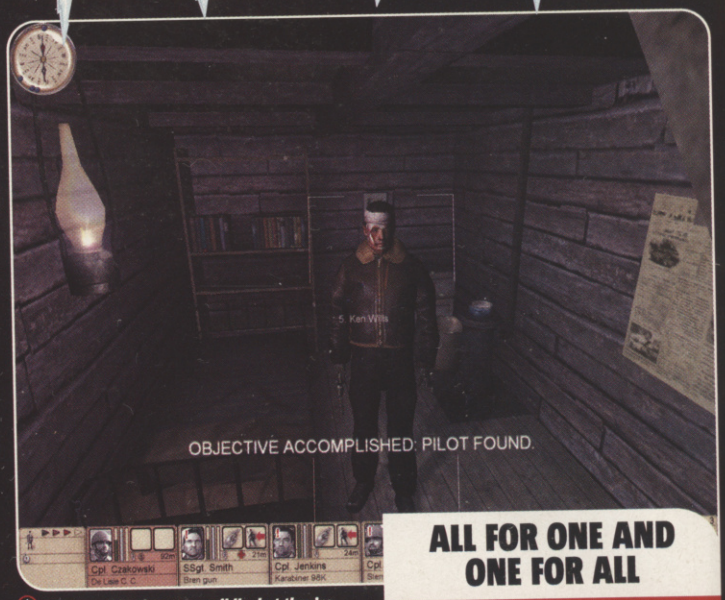
8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 (PS2, XB, GC)





Supplies are scarce during long missions so plunder corpses for weapons and ammo

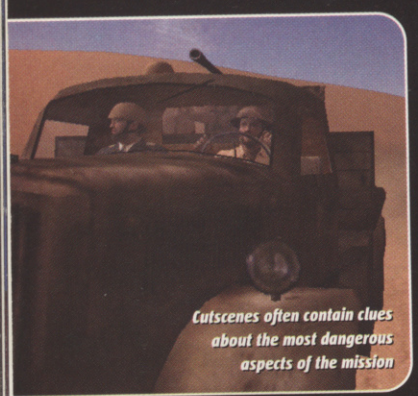


Mission objectives vary wildly, but they're long and they'll eat up your life playing through

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

GAME INFO | OUT: DECEMBER 31 | COST: £34.99 | PLAYERS: 1-32 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: TAKE 2 | DEV: ILLUSION SOFTWORKS | WWW.HIDDEN-AND-DANGEROUS.COM | REVIEWED ON PC CD ROM

GET BEHIND ENEMY LINES AND MESS 'EM UP BAD



Cutscenes often contain clues about the most dangerous aspects of the mission

The original Hidden & Dangerous got big love for being a realistic WWII shooter, but also criticism for its unforgiving nature: one mistake, instant death, fingers chewed to the bone in frustration.

Thankfully, the long-awaited sequel is a more rewarding and much less frustrating experience, thanks to the revamped control system and tweaked enemy AI.

WHO DARES...

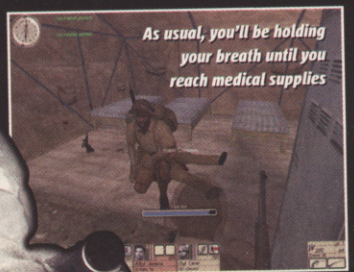
It's still set around real scenarios from World War II, but this time out

Wearing a disguise is a clever way of fooling the enemy. This tank is clearly perplexed

Some missions are so stealthy that only one commando can undertake them

So you can boom 'em up from a distance. But can you get up close and grease the Hun?

Hidden & Dangerous has taken the 'world' bit to heart, so you get to explore the frozen wastes of Norway, the baking deserts of North Africa, and the steaming jungles of Burma. Six major campaigns are split into several lengthy missions. At the start of each campaign you get to choose your squad of four from a pool of crack SAS grunts, all with varying abilities and attributes that will be further enhanced if used effectively during a mission. Once you're dropped in behind enemy lines there's a gnawing sense of isolation and tension that increases as your tight-knit team sneak, prowl and shoot their way to victory. The superb character animations, sound effects and enemy AI all contribute to the heightened drama. Your men become visibly bloodied, battered and tattered as the missions progress, and the in-game chatter sounds chillingly authentic. It all adds up to a highly polished sequel that clearly surpasses the original. Well worth the wait. CVG

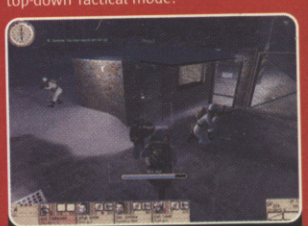


As usual, you'll be holding your breath until you reach medical supplies

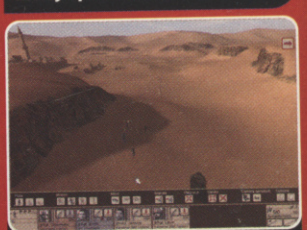
ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL

Commanding your unit is much more instinctive than in the first game.

If you want to throw yourself into the action without too much pre-planning, use the Dynamic mode to control your men with just a few hot keys. If you want to be more strategic, you can use the top-down Tactical mode.



In Dynamic mode use the keyboard number pad to issue commands to nearby squad members



Use the Tactical viewpoint to issue your men with orders, then sit back and watch as they do your bidding

If you can force the enemy to surrender you can steal their clothes

games VERDICT

Hidden & Dangerous 2 improves on virtually every aspect of the classic first game. Not perfect, but it's still an absorbing, arduous and suitably blood-soaked experience. **Maura**

- Incredibly detailed environments, equipment and uniforms. Feels like living history
- Huge, absorbing missions. Hours of play
- Your squad doesn't always obey you
- Gameplay still too unforgiving for some
- Only one save slot causes problems

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3 (PC, XB)

Ratchet & Clank

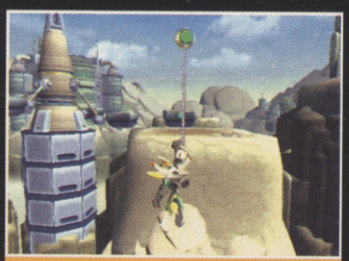
Enemies might look tough but they sure don't like pussy

Locked And Loaded

GAME INFO | OUT: NOV 21 | COST: £39.99 | PLAYERS: 1 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: SONY | DEV: INSOMNIAC | WWW.RATCHETANDCLANK2.COM | REVIEWED ON PS2

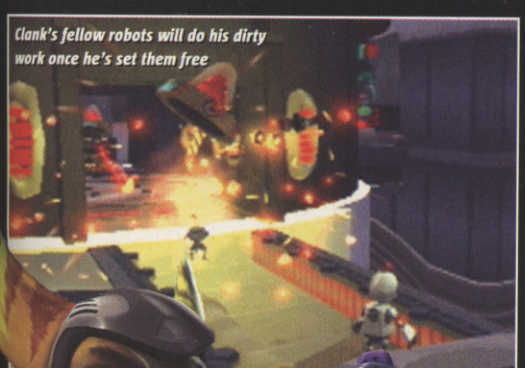
THE CARTOON DUO WITH THE BIG TOOLS RETURN FOR MORE EXPLOSIVE ACTION

Blow up ridiculous-looking aliens with more accuracy in first-person mode



There's enough room in the massive environments to swing a cat

The longer you keep playing, the meatier your weapons get



Clank's fellow robots will do his dirty work once he's set them free

Custard and fish fingers are great, but that doesn't mean shoving them on the same plate will guarantee a culinary masterpiece. Thankfully, developer Insomniac has proven itself adept at mixing different ingredients in the videogames' kitchen with last year's action platformer Ratchet & Clank. Now, the oversized furball and diminutive rustbucket are back and hot on the heels of an intergalactic armaments thief.

GENRE BENDER

Seamlessly melding frantic blasting action with traditional platforming acrobatics, Ratchet & Clank 2 keeps the pace wound taut with its relentless assault of refreshingly diverse gameplay elements. One minute you'll be blazing down corridors, bullets ricocheting off the walls as mechanoid detritus rips through the air around you, the next you'll be doing Star Fox-style dog-fighting across a distant nebula or scavenging junk to trade for more ferocious munitions.

If the frenetic action isn't enough to keep your jaw set and your fingers flailing, R&C2 introduces some staple RPG elements to keep interest levels locked. Using a transparent hit points system, continued play not only beefs up Ratchet's moves and abilities – granting access to new areas, for example – but also the devastating firepower of his arsenal. There's even the opportunity to indulge your inner Boy Racer and jazz up your rocket ship with chunky new lasers and cheeky go-faster stripes, provided you've got the cash to splash.

If there's a fault to be found, it's that R&C2 doesn't really deviate from the framework established by its predecessor. While bigger, tougher and more varied this time around, there's still nothing here that we haven't seen before and the game lacks the kind of indefinable magic that oozes from some of Nintendo's big name platformers. However, the sheer polish, humour and variety of objectives means all but the most committed platform and shooter haters should have a blast. Literally.

BIT ON THE SIDE

As if the massive main quest wasn't enough to be getting on with, Insomniac has shoe-horned several well-endowed sub-games into Ratchet & Clank 2's already bulging sack of gameplay goodies.

Challenge imposing enemies in the Battle Arena to win unimaginable wealth

High-speed hi-jinx await those who are brave (or foolhardy) enough to enter the hoverbike championship...

The Starfox-inspired dogfighting missions are tedious but rewarding

A platformer wouldn't be a platformer without a festive snow-covered level

computer and video games VERDICT

A big sock of tried-and-tested gaming elements swung round and belted with such vigour, you won't have the mental faculties left to realise you've seen it all before. **Matt W**

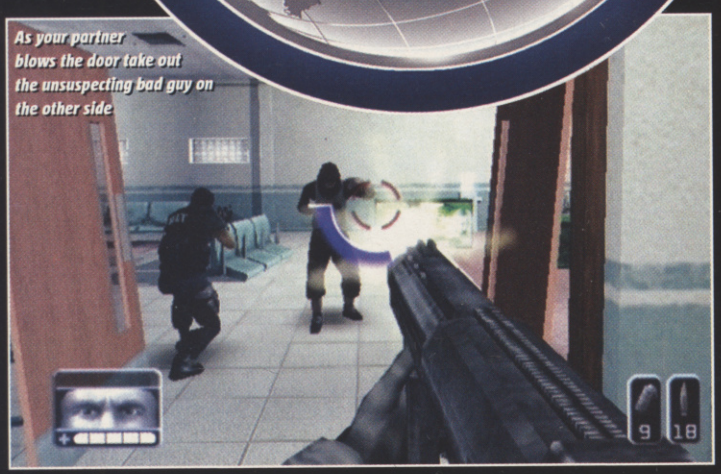
- Stuffed full of things to see and do
- Beautiful graphics and presentation
- Just like playing a quality cartoon

- Not much different from the first game
- Tedious unskippable dogfight sections
- Humour mightn't be to everyone's taste

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE... Jak II (PS2) ■ Super Mario Sunshine (GC)

SWAT GLOBAL STRIKE TEAM

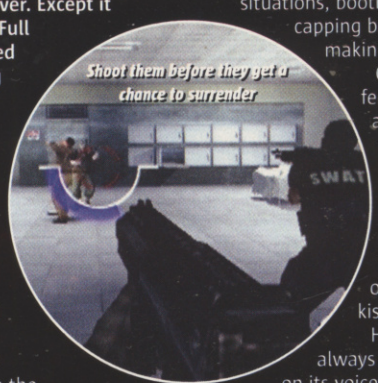


GAME INFO | OUT: NOVEMBER 21 COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4 | ONLINE GAMING | PUB: VIVENDI UNIVERSAL | DEV ARGONAUT GAMES | WWW.VIVENDI.CO.UK | REVIEWED ON: PS2 | ALSO AVAILABLE: XBOX

FINALLY, A VIDEOGAME THAT LISTENS WHEN YOU YELL AT IT

We don't remember Virtual Reality, but an old tramp once told us it was going to change videogames forever. Except it didn't. Same for Full Motion Video. Ned who sells the Big Issue said it was going to be 'like playing a film'. Except it never really caught on.

And now there's this: the prospect of being able to tell computers what to do using voice recognition. With the impending arrival of SOCOM 2, Rainbow Six 3 and now SWAT GST, that dream inches ever closer.



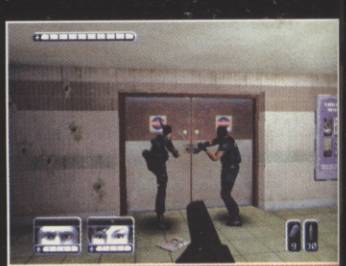
"HIT THE DECK, MOFO!"

The action in SWAT GST has a real arcade feel to it, with the emphasis firmly on pick-up-and-play as you guide your team through a series of hostage situations, booting open doors, capping bad-guy ass and making the odd arrest.

Once you get over feeling like a bit of a tit, the headset is fun and allows you really simple control over your team – in no time you'll be bursting through doors and ordering everyone to kiss the floor tiles.

However, GST was always going to be judged on its voice recognition system, and sadly this is somewhat flawed. Yes, it's impressive that it picks up your commands, but it can wind you

"Sorry, my mistake. When I said SWAT, I meant the Swindon Women's Ambulance Team. Argh!"

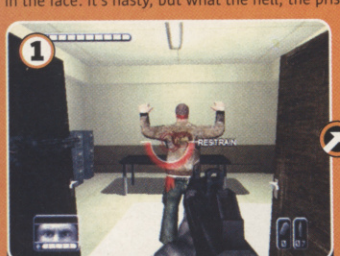


This is what it's all about – boot open the doors, get in there and start capping criminal ass

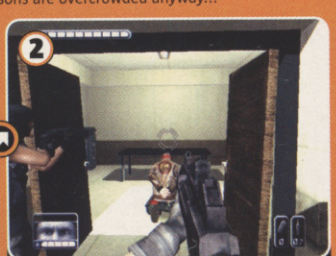
THIS TRIGGER FINGER. IT... ITCHES

As the good guys your behaviour must fall within certain rules of engagement.

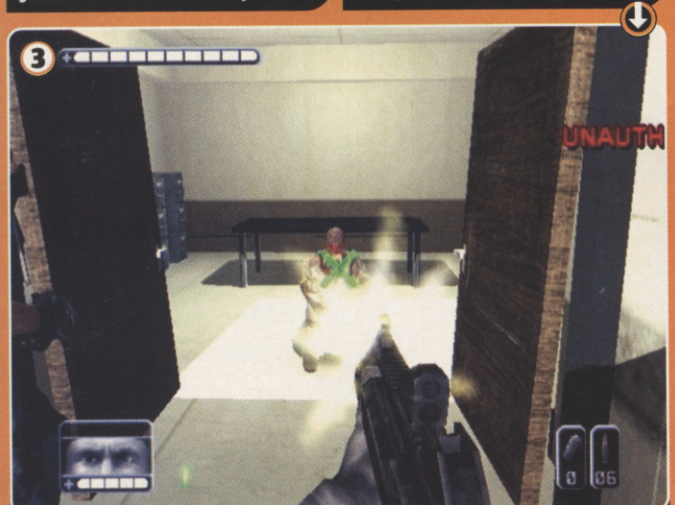
Saving hostages and arresting enemies earns you points with which you can upgrade your weapons. However if someone really annoys you feel free to cuff them first, then shoot them in the face. It's nasty, but what the hell, the prisons are overcrowded anyway...



He surrenders, sure that at least he will be granted decent treatment and a fair trial



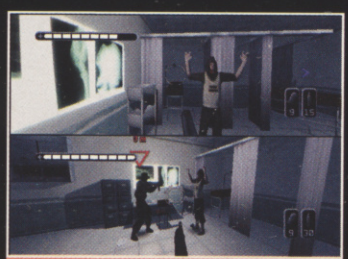
He gets down, allowing you, an upstanding law enforcement officer, to cuff him



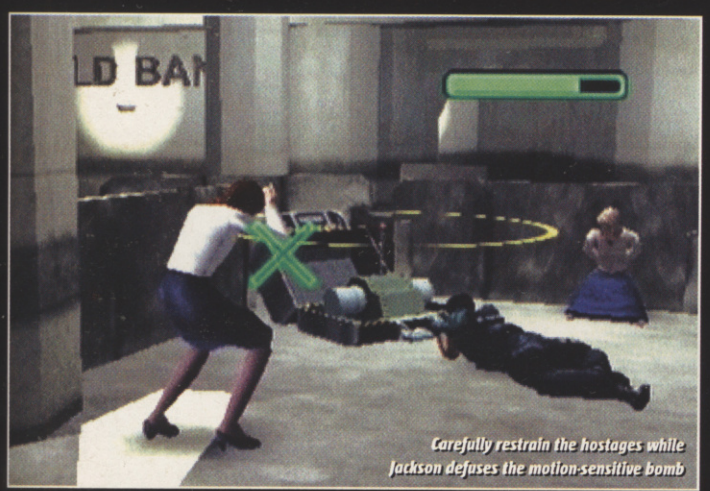
But he's got you on the wrong day. "What did you just call me, punk? Eat bullets!" BLAM!

A mere flesh wound, here comes the money shot

This Manchester United fan is lined up beautifully. Just squeeze the trigger...



Do yourself a favour and grease the fashion victim before he spreads, like a virus



Carefully restrain the hostages while Jackson defuses the motion-sensitive bomb

Ⓐ "You're under arrest, black lady janitor, for possession of an offensive stereotype"

Ⓑ When gas is used, you have our permission to wave your hand at your ass and go, "Poo!"

CARNAGE IN THE CO-OP (TERROR AT TESCO)

The co-op modes in GST have a slightly different plot to those in single-player mode.

You can also split up from your partner and take different routes, which provides loads of opportunities for team-based play. There are also some great head-to-head options where you can ditch the usual rules of engagement and blast each other to bits.

No need for voice recognition in co-op. Your mate's sitting next to you for this one...

If your team get a little low on health, why not take over killing duties yourself?

Ⓒ Between two heavily armed SWAT officers is not the best place to find yourself

Ⓓ There's so much more space on London's Underground when you can take an assault rifle

up. You have to be. Very. Precise. With. Your. Speech. Jeeves. This gets fecking irritating if you're in the middle of a firefight and bark your orders with less than perfect elocution and your team just stand around scratching their behinds. It is possible to control your squad via the directional pad but this is a little tricky and somewhat against the spirit of the game. Also, it can be a little difficult to get your team to run off and do things on their own. For instance, if you want your sniper to take out a geezer causing you problems you have to aim the cursor at him and then issue your orders. This often means putting yourself in the firing line, and you don't want that. You should be able to send your team into the danger zone while you wait in safety, right?

Overall GST is a solid, enjoyable shooter that is hamstrung slightly by the lack of depth of control offered by the voice recognition system. However, the fact that this is the first time the software has been incorporated this much into a console game is worthy of high praise. A bright start then for voice recognition, but the future looks brighter.

THE TWAT HAT

Sadly there's no headset with SWAT so you'll have to shell out £14.99 for one.

However, with voice recognition software on the increase this isn't a waste of cash. Also, Xbox Live users will find it extremely useful, even if it does make you look like you work in a call centre...

Games VERDICT

GST isn't the title to make voice recognition gaming the next big thing but it certainly gives it a shove. This is fun and instantly playable blasting with the added fun of a new toy. **Paul A**

- Simple squad control system
- Loads of fun barking orders at your TV
- Involving multiplayer modes
- Voice recognition system does not quite add enough to the game
- Headset needs to be purchased separately

8 OUT OF TEN

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THIS... ■ Rainbow Six 3 (Xbox)

REVIEWS ROUND-UP!

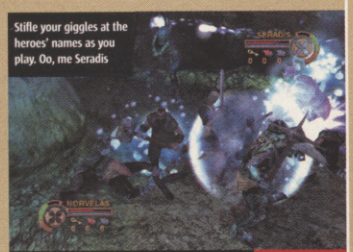
Stuffed, rammed, packed-in so tight that we squeak when we move. Any way you describe it, we're stuffed so full of reviews this month we're at risk of breaking some kind of EU law. These are the only pages you need for the full skinny on the rest of this month's releases. Feast your eyes on the good, the bad and the Christmas turkey...

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: HEROES

■ Format: XBOX ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1-4 ■ Out: Now

More fun in co-operative play than alone, this is better than recent Gauntlet games but not a patch on Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance.

Set in the stupidly popular (and beardy) D&D universe, this uses a more lightweight set of D&D rules and is far more arcade-y than some purists will find acceptable.



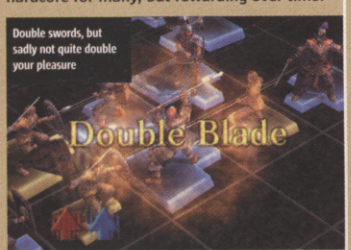
■ Great multiplayer fun with four
■ Fairly substantial weapon upgrade system
■ You can't fight each other in multiplay
■ Becomes repetitive after a few hours

6 OUT OF TEN

DYNASTY TACTICS 2

■ Format: PS2 ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1-2 ■ Out: Now

Expands on the first turn-based strategy game. Complicates the game yet further with a far more expansive rule set. Too hardcore for many, but rewarding over time.



■ Looks pretty swanky for strategy
■ Loads of depth for stat-heads
■ Slow pace and horribly complicated
■ Less a sequel and more of an update

6 OUT OF TEN

FORGOTTEN CONFLICT

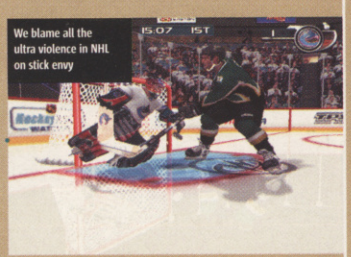
■ Format: PC ■ Cost: £29.99
■ Players: 1 ■ Out: Now

More historical gaming, this time set between 1950-53 during Korean War.

There are 15 tough tactical missions in a game that's a lot like Commandos, but thankfully not quite as fist-eatingly harsh. Not very cutting edge, but good nonetheless.

■ A war game not set in WWII
■ ...or Vietnam. Hurrah!
■ Looks and feels a bit old hat
■ Slow tactical action not for everyone

7 OUT OF TEN



NHL HITZ PRO

■ Format: PS2 ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1-10 ■ Out: Now

A 'serious' sports game from Midway's normally ker-azy sports stable. The smashy crashy bone-crunching play transfers well to multiplayer and there is a load of online play modes to enjoy too. Great stuff, if a bit niche.

■ Less 'wacky' than Midway's usual efforts
■ Hardcore sports strategies mix with puck-busting action
■ Fans of earlier titles might suggest that losing the wilder side of the game has blunted its edge

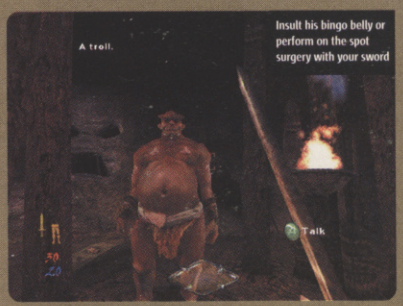
7 OUT OF TEN

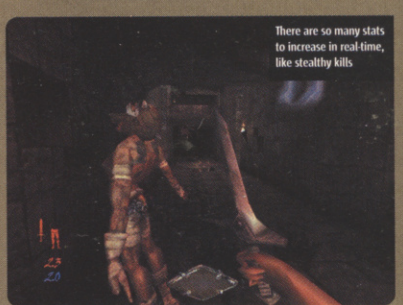
ARX FATALIS

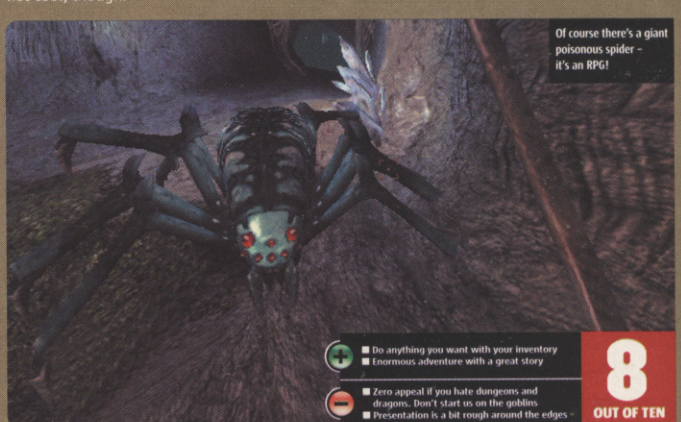
■ Format: XBOX ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1 ■ Out: Now

Xbox is fast becoming the machine of choice for RPG-heads. All of that processing power under the hood plus hard drive means you can do stuff on Xbox you can't do on any other home consoles. Like Arx Fatalis, a game where if you dropped a carrot in a dungeon 20 playing hours ago, it would still be there when you return. Amazing.

With a muddy visual palette and goblins a go-go, this first-person role-player is beyond beardy. It's also a class example of how to create a believable adventure world, where your hero gets hungry and where you have almost complete freedom to do exactly as you please with the items you have in your possession. Create potions and forge your own weapons, and generally escape into a compelling alternate reality that is pure heaven for adventure fans. It's not cool, though.







■ Do anything you want with your inventory
■ Enormous adventure with a great story
■ Zero appeal if you hate dungeons and dragons. Don't start us on the goblins
■ Presentation is a bit rough around the edges

8 OUT OF TEN

TIME CRISIS 3

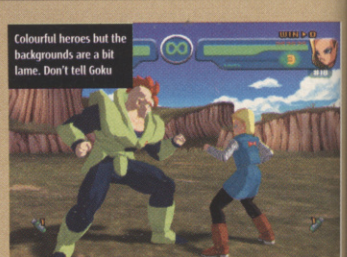
■ Format: PS2 ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1-2 ■ Out: Now

Fun only with a lightgun and over way too quickly, but Namco's police shooter series is still a blast, especially with a second player.

This latest instalment gives you a few decent game modes, but is better suited to rental than buying.

■ The action is as adrenaline fuelled as ever
■ Includes fourteen stages you didn't play in the arcades
■ Still over way too quickly
■ Your arms ache after just a few missions

6 OUT OF TEN



DRAGON BALL Z BUDOKAI

■ Format: GC ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1-2 ■ Out: Now

One for fans of the show. A port of the PS2 original, the fighting is fast but basic.

The authenticity to the cartoon show is a bonus, but not if you don't know your Kamehameha from your Khyber.

■ Fast and colourful graphics
■ A good spin-off from the show
■ The fighting is way too simple
■ It's the original game, not the new one

6 OUT OF TEN

COMMANDOS 3: DESTINATION BERLIN

■ Format: PC ■ Cost: £29.99
■ Players: 1-8 ■ Out: Now

Point and click your way to glory across three main campaigns set in Stalingrad, Central Europe and Normandy. Every bit as crushingly difficult as the previous games, the latest top-down tactical adventure throws eight-way multiplayer into the mix.

There's tension and drama, but it's also pretty slow and way too tough for most.

■ Beautifully drawn environments
■ More depth than an ocean trench
■ It's just too frickin' difficult
■ Top-down is SO last decade

7 OUT OF TEN

CRASH NITRO KART

■ Format: PS2, XBOX, GC ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1-8 ■ Out: Now

It's got more game modes than Mario's latest offering and is just as fast/slow (depending on your opinion of Double Dash!!) but doesn't quite have the magic of Nintendo's game.

There's a full adventure mode, single-player championships and multiplayer, and it's actually a lot better than you might expect, but we can't see it giving Luigi and chums a bloody nose on Cube this Xmas.

■ Big, brash and bright – it's pure Crash
■ There's more game here than Double Dash!!

■ Feels a little blank and soulless
■ Controls aren't as tight as they should be

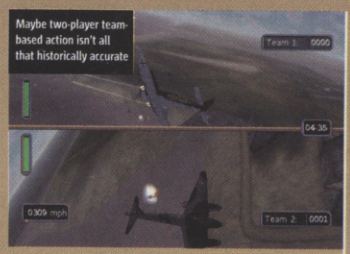
7 OUT OF TEN

SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY

■ Format: PS2, XBOX, PC ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1-2 ■ Out: Now

You're a WWII fighter pilot cruising the skies over war-torn Europe, finger poised, ready to unleash death from above upon Nazi scum.

You'll enjoy the aerial combat for a bit, but it's neither full sim nor simple enough for pure shooter fans. We prefer Crimson Skies.



■ Great soundtrack and presentation
■ Solid enough, if unremarkable

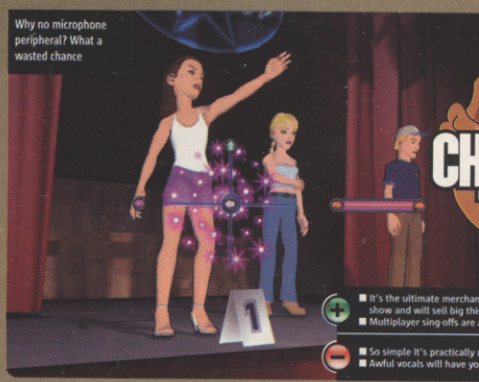
■ It doesn't stand out from other dogfighters
■ Is anyone else tired of WWII games yet?

7 OUT OF TEN

POP IDOL

■ Format: PS2, GBA, PC ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1-2 ■ Out: Now

The worst thing to come out of the Pop Idol phenomenon so far, aside from Simon Cowell himself, of course. This is sub-standard rhythm action fare using simple presses on a pad or dance mat. The track list is good but the vocals are embarrassingly weak and even more out of tune if you get your timing wrong. It's only slightly less awful in multiplayer.



CHRISTMAS TURKEY

■ It's the ultimate merchandise if you love the show and will sell big this Xmas
■ Multiplayer sing-offs are almost tuneful

■ So simple it's practically retarded
■ Awful vocals will have your toes curling

4 OUT OF TEN

FORD RACING 2

■ Format: PS2, XBOX, PC ■ Cost: £14.99
■ Players: 1-2 ■ Out: Now

All the fun of Gran Turismo at a pocket money price? Well, almost. There are certainly many game options here, and an impressive showroom full of Ford cars, both historic and contemporary, to drive.

The handling feels more like a basic arcade game than a simulation but it's a great bargain package and a cut-price lesson a few other publishers could learn from.

■ It's cheap and there's quite a bit to it
■ If you like Fords it's orgasmic

■ Handling and tracks dumbed down somewhat
■ Fords aren't as much fun as Ferraris

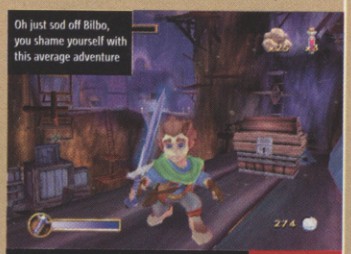
7 OUT OF TEN

THE HOBBIT

■ Format: PS2, XBOX, GC, PC ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1 ■ Out: Now

This may be for younger players, but it's still a touch offensive to see Tolkien's awesome tale distilled into a series of monotonous platform game clichés, trotted out like a gallery of rejected Rayman ideas.

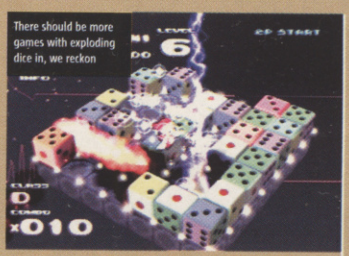
Frustrating and annoying, only the story saves this from being a total shambles. Plus, if you thought Peter Jackson's hobbits had stupid haircuts, wait till you see Bilbo's spawn of Satan barnet and bushy brows. Scary.



■ Tolkien's story rocks as much as ever
■ The presentation is acceptable

■ Not in the spirit of the book
■ Boring platform action

5 OUT OF TEN



BOMBASTIC

■ Format: PS2 ■ Cost: £29.99
■ Players: 1-4 ■ Out: Now

Break your head AND fingers with this dazzling puzzle game. You'll be seeing dice in your sleep.

It's strangely compelling, even if it breaks the first part of the golden rule that decrees all puzzlers should be easy to pick up and play and then impossible to put down again. Give it a chance and you'll need to check into rehab before you stop playing.

■ Cheaper price and mind-busting
■ Keeps opening up the more you play

■ It's pretty hard to suss out at the start
■ As with all puzzlers, ultimately limited

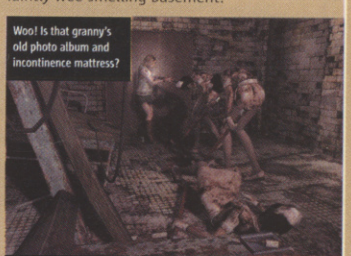
7 OUT OF TEN

SILENT HILL 3

■ Format: PC ■ Cost: £29.99
■ Players: 1 ■ Out: Now

This port of the PS2 game has sharper visuals but the story is just as nonsensical and, even worse, the controls don't transfer all that well to PC.

No innovation over the second in the series, we're talking lots of trudging around in the dark. Some players will find this atmospheric, while others will think it's just about as spooky as clearing out your granny's faintly-wee-smelling basement.



■ Delves even deeper into the bizarre world of Silent Hill
■ Enemies are frightening and gigantic

■ The same old Silent Hill gameplay you've seen before
■ Laughable compared to high-spec PC games

6 OUT OF TEN

GLADIUS

■ Format: PS2, XBOX, GC ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1-4 ■ Out: Now

Another murkily-coloured strategy RPG, this time set in a gladiatorial world. You must recruit and train warriors and see them either succeed in combat, or be sliced to syrupy pieces.

What Gladius gets right is the wealth of combat options you get to to play about with, but on the downside, it's really deathly slow and you need to put in a lot of work before you start having any fun.

■ Gladiators are cooler than goblins at least
■ Combat system is comprehensive

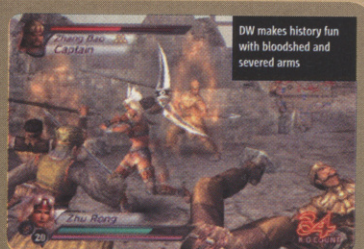
■ You need to know how strategy RPGs work
■ Snail's pace will upset impatient players

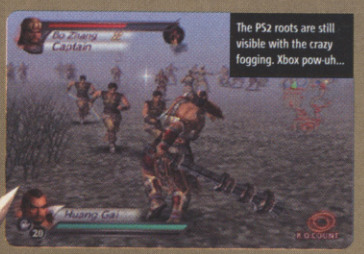
6 OUT OF TEN

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4

■ Format: XBOX ■ Cost: £39.99
■ Players: 1-2 ■ Out: Now

The Dynasty Warriors series is a licence to repeatedly hack oriental body parts clean off, and with added Xbox visual panache, this is almost the definitive version. Battle strategy clashes with all-out arcade button mashing on battlefields with hundreds of enemies on screen at once. It's fun, but it's so similar to the other DW games it's naughty.

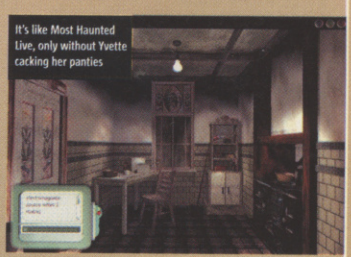




■ Insane action on historical battlefields
■ Xbox visuals are the nicest in a DW game yet

■ Identical to the other three games
■ You're treated to pop-up AND slow-down

6 OUT OF TEN



DARK FALL: THE JOURNAL

■ Format: PC ■ Cost: £9.99
■ Players: 1 ■ Out: Now

Pointing and clicking went the way of the dodo some time ago but if you want to see what the fuss was about, this is a good example of the genre – shocking cockney accents aside.

Solve the spooky mystery, set in our very own Daahrset (that's Dorset in West Country-ese), by lateral thinking. Old-fashioned fun for a time, but it's hardly GTA is it?

■ A sound ghost story with a twist
■ It's cheap and not too spec-heavy

■ Rubbish graphics by today's standards
■ About as cutting edge as The Teletubbies

5 OUT OF TEN

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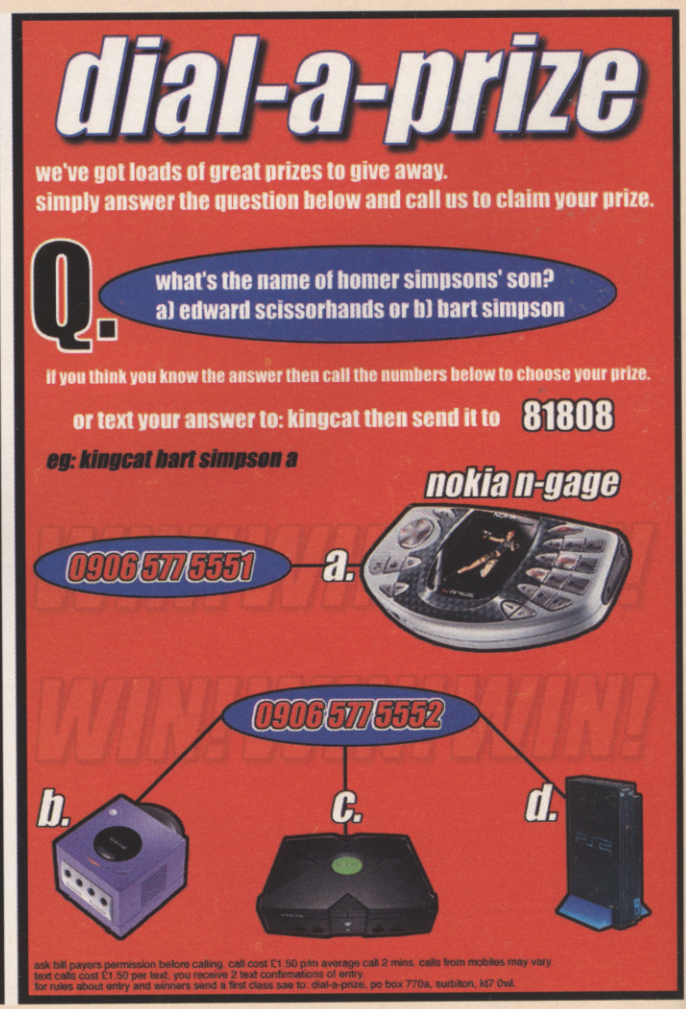
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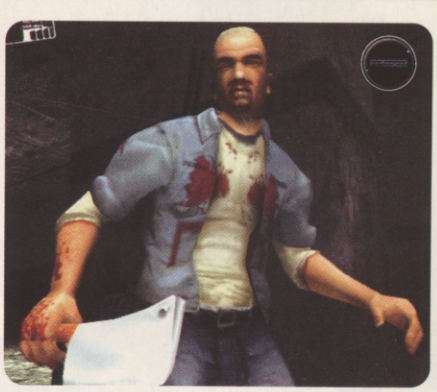

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It's ultra-violent, but is it any good? We'll have the definitive review of the game of choice for balaclava-wearing snuff-lovers everywhere

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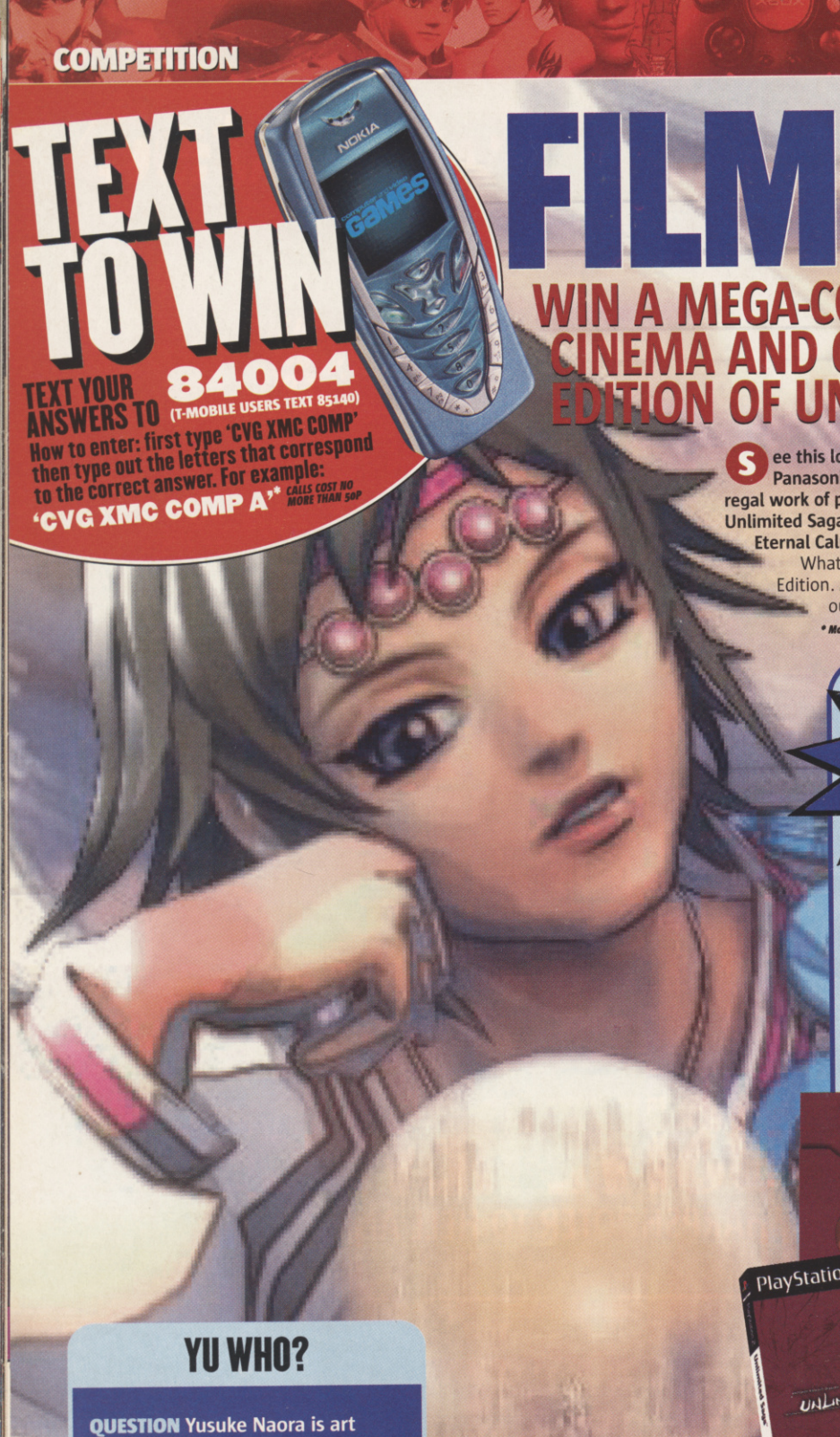

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But to score the best Christmas package takes organisation – don't just leave it to your mum. Luckily for you/her, we've worked out how to get maximum bang for your buck. We've scoured the land to find the best bundles for each console, featuring the hottest games at the best prices. Try and buy early though, as these packages are flying off the shelves.

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● WHERE?: Comet ● HOW MUCH?: £169.95
● WHAT YOU GET: PS2, 4 Gamers Game Case, Splinter Cell, BMX XXX, F1 Formula 1 2002, Batman Vengeance, Blade II DVD.

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Splinter Cell is one of the finest stealth 'em ups around, and the inclusion of the Blade II DVD makes this superb value for money. Don't let Granny play BMX XXX though, it's a bit naughty.

2 ONE FOR THE FAMILY PACKAGE

● WHERE?: Toys R Us ● HOW MUCH?: £159.89
● WHAT YOU GET: PS2, Half-Life, F1 Formula 1 2003, Spyro: Enter The Dragonfly, Music Maker, The Sum Of All Fears

This five-game bundle has something for everyone in the family, but all you need to know is that it includes Half-Life, possibly the greatest FPS ever, ever, ever. And Spyro, who's a cute purple dragon.

3 DANCIN' FOOL PACKAGE

● WHERE?: Toys R Us ● HOW MUCH?: £179.99
● WHAT YOU GET: Eye Toy, Play On Dance Mat, Britney's Dance Mat, Crazy Taxi, Spyro: Enter The Dragonfly

Expect the entire nation to be waving their arms in front of their television set this Christmas as Eye Toy fever sweeps the globe. When your arms get tired, slap the Britney mat down and try to duplicate that infamous Madonna snog.

VERDICT

If you're looking for lots of games for your money then the Toys R Us Family bundle just about shades it. This package has got plenty of variety, and it costs just £20 more than the price of a standalone PS2. In fact, if you're not averse to a bit of the old disco-dancing this one's right up your alley...

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1 CHRISTMAS CARNAGE PACKAGE

● WHERE?: GAME ● HOW MUCH?: £139.99
● WHAT YOU GET: Xbox, Timesplitters 2, Medal Of Honor: Frontline, Halo, Midtown Madness 3, two month free subscription to Xbox Live

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2 SNEAK N' WRESTLE PACKAGE

● WHERE?: Toys R Us ● HOW MUCH?: £149.99
● WHAT YOU GET: Xbox, Halo, Midtown Madness 3, Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell, Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon, WWE Raw, extra Powerpad, two month Xbox Live subscription

Five quality games, including two undisputed classics (Halo and Splinter Cell) plus an extra powerpad for your lovely new Xbox makes this bundle almost too good to be true.

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● WHERE?: Toys R Us ● HOW MUCH?: £189.99
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The most expensive bundle but superb value for money, especially if you use the very impressive DVD capabilities of the big black box of joy or if you're a fan of driving games.

VERDICT

The Xbox is particularly blessed with first-person shooters, so if that's the kind of game you like you'll be able to pick up some excellent bundles with several classics included. Few duds here, but we reckon that the Sneak n' Wrestle package should have something to please most gamers.

GAMECUBE

1 STAR WARS PACKAGE

● WHERE?: GAME ● HOW MUCH?: £99.99
● WHAT YOU GET: GameCube Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader, Star Wars: The Clone Wars, Star Wars: Bounty Hunter

One of the few themed bundles around, and destined to fly off the shelves as everybody loves Star Wars. You won't find Rogue Leader on any other console so this is a good opportunity to snap it up for a knockdown price.

2 CHRISTMAS STUFFING PACKAGE

● WHERE?: Toys R Us ● HOW MUCH?: £159.99
● WHAT YOU GET: Purple GameCube, The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, WWE Wrestlemania 8, Harry Potter And The Chamber of Secrets, Medal of Honor: Frontline, James Bond 007: Nightfire, FIFA 2003, Driven, Ultimate Driving Pack including X-Racer wheel, Powergrip Controller, 4MB Memory Card

If you're not tied to a tight budget, this is a sensational bundle. Seven games, including the incomparable Zelda make it well worth shelling out a few extra pennies as long as you don't mind having a purple GameCube!

3 BUDGET PACKAGE

● WHERE?: Gamestation ● HOW MUCH?: £79.99
● WHAT YOU GET: Purple GameCube, Star Wars: Jedi Outcast: Jedi Knight II Wildthings Control Pad, Wildthings Memory Card

If you're looking for a stripped-down GameCube starter pack this is the perfect bundle for you. It won't break the bank, and you should still have enough pennies left over to treat yourself to Zelda or Mario Kart: Double Dash!!

VERDICT

It may be a little pricey, but it's hard to see beyond the Christmas Stuffing bundle. Loads of great games, plus a bonus driving pack make this a very tempting package indeed. If you're a Star Wars fan though, you already know what you're going for – that's if you haven't got half that stuff already.

GAME BOY ADVANCE

1 BUTT UGLY PACKAGE

● WHERE?: Toys R Us ● HOW MUCH?: £129.99
● WHAT YOU GET: Silver GBA SP, WWE Road To Wrestlemania x 8, Lord Of The Rings: Fellowship Of The Ring, Butt Ugly Martians, CT Special Forces, Daredevil, Travel Pack, including Travel Wallet, Earphones, Car Adaptor, Screen Magnifier

Strangely enough, there are very few GBA SP packages around with more than a couple of games included, so this five-game collection caught our eye instantly.

2 GAMELESS PACKAGE

● WHERE?: John Lewis ● HOW MUCH?: £108.50
● WHAT YOU GET: Black GBA SP, Kitbag, Console Grips, Screen Magnifier, Skins, Multi-Link cable, Car Adaptor, Headphone Adaptor, Headphones

If you prefer to choose your own game but still want some goodies thrown in for your money this is probably the most comprehensive peripherals package to be found anywhere.

3 SURFING ZELDA PACKAGE

● WHERE?: GAME ● HOW MUCH?: £114.97
● WHAT YOU GET: GBA SP (Silver, Black or Blue), The Legend of Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords, Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer

Who could resist such a package, featuring one of the greatest RPG games ever? If you choose this bundle, don't expect to be seeing too much of your relatives over the festive season. Tell them you're spending time with your mate Link.

VERDICT

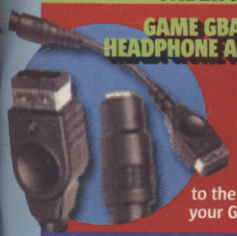
A decent GBA SP bundle is hard to come by, but we've ferreted out three of the best for you. For the sheer quality of the games on offer and the highly competitive price the Surfing Zelda package comes out on top. The Gameless Package is also great if you feel you need more peripherals than any man alive.

STOCKING FILLERS

Once you've got your console you'll be wanting to pamper it. Remember, a console is for life, not just for Christmas. Lavish your pride and joy with love and it will reward you tenfold, providing endless hours of innocent pleasure. And for those already in a long-term relationship with their console, how about spicing things up with a few extra treats? It doesn't take much to show you care...

UNDER £5

GAME GBA SP HEADPHONE ADAPTOR



● WHERE?: GAME
● HOW MUCH?: £2.99
Shut out the world and listen to the sweet sounds of your GBA SP in privacy.

£5-£10

4GAMERS DVD REMOTE AND RECEIVER FOR PS2

● WHERE?: Argos
● HOW MUCH?: £9.99
That's £10 cheaper than the official version yet does the job just as well. Can't say fairer that that

£11-£15

PS2 GAME DANCE MAT PRO EDITION

● WHERE?: GAME
● HOW MUCH?: £14.99
With improved Anti-Slip Surface to prevent embarrassing mishaps

£16-£20

4GAMERS 2.1 SPEAKER MINI SOUND SYSTEM

● WHERE?: Index
● HOW MUCH?: £19.99
This little baby's compatible with all consoles as well as portable CD, MP3 and MD players. Bargain!

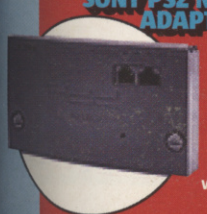
£21-£25

PS2 SCORPION 3 LIGHTGUN

● WHERE?: Index
● HOW MUCH?: £24.99
Compatible with all PS2 lightgun games. Suitable for all television sets up to 100Hz

£26-£30

SONY PS2 NETWORK ADAPTOR



● WHERE?: GAME
● HOW MUCH?: £29.99
Got a broadband connection? Then play PS2 games with friends across the globe

● RETRO ● RETRO ● RETRO

If you're yearning to recapture those golden gameplaying days of yore when Strider was a cutting-edge platform game, then retro gaming is the way to go.

Sites such as eBay (www.ebay.co.uk) and CEX (www.cex.co.uk) are a treasure trove for the classic game hunter still hankering after the glory days of Alex Kidd. In the High Street, look for stores such as Gamestation, whose retro line-up includes second-hand NES, SNES, Saturn, Mega Drive and Master System consoles and games. Check their website (www.gamestation.co.uk) to find your local store.

Go even further back and you can pick up a TV games system from GAME for £24.99, featuring Atari classics such as Asteroids, Pong, Breakout, Gravitar and Aventure.

● PC ● PC ● PC ● PC ● PC ●

When considering your bundle buying options this year, don't forget the PC. Some still believe it to be the greatest gaming platform around, with more power and cheaper games than any other.

Of course, the one major drawback behind PC gaming is the initial cost of the hardware. To be able to play the latest games you'll need to spend at least £700 on a PC, and realistically much more. However, if you're up for the challenge, or as rich as that Russian bloke that bought Chelsea, there are some awesome games on the horizon for PC owners, including Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne, Half-Life 2, Doom III, Deus Ex: Invisible War and Counter-Strike: Condition Zero. 'Scuse us while we wipe away the drool.

● N-GAGE ● N-GAGE ● N-GAGE ●

The N-Gage has emerged this Christmas to snatch the handheld crown, but a retail price of around £229 may put some buyers off.

You can get it cheaper or even for free on certain mobile phone contracts, but you usually have to be over 18 to sign up. Still, there are some cracking games available on the versatile Cornish pasty, including Super Monkey Ball, Tomb Raider, Pandemonium and Sonic N.

● BUDGET GAMES ● BUDGET GAMES ● BUDGET GAMES ●

PS2 PLATINUM

HOW MUCH?: £19.99
The PS2 Platinum range leads from the front with these classic games available immediately and a whole load more on the way.

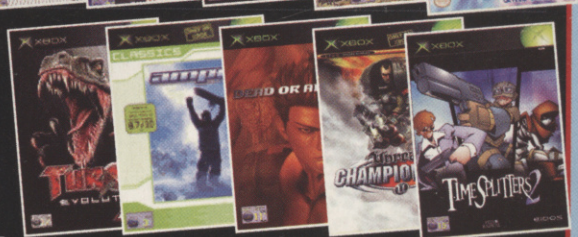
ESSENTIAL GAMES: Final Fantasy X, Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell, Tekken 4, Pro Evolution Soccer, James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire, Red Faction, SSX Tricky, WWE Smackdown! Just Bring It, Jak And Daxter: The Precursor Legacy, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, Max Payne, Devil May Cry, Grand Theft Auto III, Gran Turismo 3, Silent Hill 2 – Director's Cut

GC PLAYER'S CHOICE

HOW MUCH?: £19.99
To coincide with the latest dramatic GameCube price slash (to £79.99) Nintendo has released the second wave of classic Cube games.
ESSENTIAL GAMES: Sonic Adventures 2: Battle, Metroid Prime, Star Fox Adventures, Mario Party 4, Super Mario Sunshine, Pikmin, Luigi's Mansion, Super Smash Bros. Melee

XBOX CLASSICS

HOW MUCH?: £19.99
If you're going to be so bold as to call your budget range 'Classics' then you had better deliver the goods. Luckily for Microsoft, these titles are certainly worthy of the name.
ESSENTIAL GAMES: Unreal Championship, FIFA Football 2003, Turok: Evolution, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, SSX Tricky, Max Payne, Dead Or Alive 3, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 007 Nightfire, Medal of Honor: Frontline, Amped, TimeSplitters 2, Hitman 2



PC: XPLOSIV

HOW MUCH?: £4.99-£9.99
If you're going to be so bold as to call your budget range 'Classics' then you had better deliver the goods. Luckily for Microsoft, these titles are certainly worthy of the name.
ESSENTIAL GAMES: Unreal Championship, FIFA Football 2003, Turok: Evolution, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, SSX Tricky, Max Payne, Dead Or Alive 3, Buffy The Vampire Slayer, 007 Nightfire, Medal of Honor: Frontline, Amped, TimeSplitters 2, Hitman 2

PSONE

HOW MUCH?: £9.99-£19.99
Most PSone games are now available at budget prices. Don't forget, they will all work on your PS2 if you don't have a PSone.
ESSENTIAL GAMES: Tenchu 2, Tomb Raider III and 4, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4, Actua Soccer 3, Actua Tennis, Dance UK, Dancing Stage Fever, Black & White, Alien Trilogy, Alone In the Dark 4, Final Fantasy Anthology, Fear Effect, Resident Evil 1-3, Final Fantasy VII-IX

FUTURE OF CONSOLES CHART

	PS2	PS1	GC	XBOX	GBASP	N-GAGE
.....fresh from the oven						
.....on the turn						
.....in the bin						

CACKMAN'S THOUGHT OF THE MONTH Take 2 has sold 25 million GTA games. If one per cent of players are inspired by it, that's 25,000 more serial killers in the world. Comforting.

CACKMAN©

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE FREE GA ON

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

CACKMAN'S 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

The old version of that festive song was crap. In all Cackman's life, he's never given anyone a swan as a present. And you certainly can't give PEOPLE away as presents. If you could, Cackman would give the people that made the new Mario Kart to a family of hungry tigers.

1 A CARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE

What good is that, Grandad? Did you get it off the market? Games run off DVDs now. You're such a gypsy. And wouldn't wrapping paper have been more traditional than a pear tree? Alzheimer's is no excuse. Oi! Stop peeing in my Dreamcast!

2 TWO TURTLE SHELLS

Give the new Mario Kart, where you can basically cheat your way from last to first without any warning whatsoever, and the old one, which relied on this thing called skill. Double Dash!!? Double gash more like.

3 THREE FRENCH GAMES

Remember when putting a French game in your console was as much an act of neglect as hitting it with a hammer? Now they're alright, because they don't have Asterix, Rayman or Tin Tin in them. Belgians you say? Same difference.

4 FOUR GAMECUBES

So we can play Mario Kart with more than four players. If only there was some global communications infrastructure accessible by modem eh, Nintendo. They could call it an Internet or something? Then we wouldn't need all these TVs, and a £60 network.

5 FIVE GOLD RINGS

So when we punch Sonic Team in the face they don't die straight away. Sonic Heroes? Oh, you did the rubbish Dreamcast ones again. Billy Hatcher? You want me to dress in a chicken suit and roll eggs? Try making more NiGHTS and less turgid pap.

6 SIX HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS

So we're finally seeing what Microsoft got when it splashed nearly $600 million on Rare: Grabbed By The Ghoulies, which is basically Luigi's Mansion meets Teletubbies. Nintendo is too busy laughing to program Mario 128.

7 SEVEN SPECIAL MOVES

Hyper Street Fighter II is on the way, because Capcom's research found three people who didn't already have one of the other hundred variants of SF II. Their names are Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy.

8 EIGHT FRANCHISES A-MILKING

It's a good job they've made a fifth Tony Hawk game! You couldn't grind in the old ones! Oh, you could. You couldn't manual! Oh, you could. You couldn't drive a car! THAT'S BECAUSE THEY WERE SKATEBOARDING GAMES, CLOWN. Sheesh...

9 NINE LADIES DANCING

Dancing games, eh? Look love: if you're fat, try eating less cake. This isn't exercise. And there should be LAWS forbidding lads playing DDR. You look like a retard, and Konami knows it. They do it because they think making you jerk about is hilarious.

10 TEN N-GAGE BOSSES A-LEAPING

Excellent work, guys. Within a month on sale, the N-Gage was reduced from £299 to ONE PENNY in some places. Cackman had more fun taking the phone to bits to get a game in than playing the thing. There's a big cliff over there. Leap away.

11 ELEVEN RANDOM PLAYERS

Still no authenticity in Pro Evolution Soccer, then. No wait: they did the kit for Parma. Cackman's no Ron Atkinson, but wouldn't ENGLISH CLUBS have worked better? And those handballs? Oh look, something happened that wasn't my fault. Advantage you. WHAT?

12 TWELVE MONKEYS DRUMMING

What Nintendo needs is a greater frequency of key franchise games. So they make a Donkey Kong drumming game. Later in the year, expect Super Mario Train Simulator, A Legend Of Zelda gun game and the pink WWII game Call Of Duty: Kirby.

WRITE TO CACKMAN

You lot must have ideas. Questions. Theories. Write to Cackman at the usual address, and the best will win an awesome prize! Senders of anything Cackman considers to be crap will be subjected to GBH in text form on this very page. Come on! You want to be famous, don't you? What else have you got to live for in your stupid little lives?

Cackman's opinions aren't necessarily those of CVG

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BABY BOY - beyonce feat sean paul	112933	TROUBLE - pink	113042	FRIDAY - daniel bedingfield	113045
P.I.M.P - 50 cent	112599	I CANT LET YOU GO - ian van dahl	112918	DANCE COMMANDER - electric six	112876
BE FAITHFUL - fatman scoop	113086	ME AGAINST THE MUSIC - britney ft...	113140	SHUT UP - black eyed peas	113123
HOLE IN THE HEAD - sugababes	113022	SLOW - kylie minogue	113084	STRAWBERREZ - mis-teeq	113165
CHIHUAHUA - dj bobo	112905	REIGN - ja rule	112679	MAKE ME WANNA SCREAM - b cantrell	113182
JUMP FOR MY LOVE - girls aloud	113163	ONE MORE CHANCE - michael jackson	113192	FLIP REVERSE - blazin squad	113129
CRASHED THE WEDDING - busted	113151	STEP IN THE NAME OF LOVE - r kelly	113193	IF YOU COME TO ME - atomic kitten	113126
SENORITA - justin timberlake	112732	LEAVE RIGHT NOW - will young	113195	YOUNG & HOPELESS - good charlotte	113131
GUILTY - blue	113044	THOIA THONG - r kelly	112948	MAYBE THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES - a park	113187

YES !!! All RINGTONES are MONOPHONIC and POLYPHONIC

WIN the new Nokia N-GAGE!

The NGAGE is much more than just a phone... you can also use it to play games and MP3's or to go online! And it could be yours if you win this fantastic competition!

09069 108959 (UK)

Comp closes 29th February 2004

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Java Game information line: 08712 225 322

National rate (UK)

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GAMES COMPATIBILITY - NOKIA: 3410, 3510i, 5100, 6100, 6310i, 6610, 7210, 7250, 7650, 8910i SHARP: GX10 SIEMENS: C55, M50, MT50 MOTOROLA T720

CHART

SURRENDER - javine	113155
SWEET DREAMS - rachel stevens	112949
SUPERSTAR - jamelia	113055
CAN'T HOLD US DOWN - c aguilera ft.	112860
FAST FOOD SONG - fast food rockers	112702
DIRRTY - christina aguilera	112256
SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL - r. williams	112840
GAY BAR - electric six	112650
ROCK YOUR BODY - justin timberlake	112508
WHITE FLAG - dido	112837
YEAH WHATEVER - westlife	112976
POWERLESS - nelly furtado	113132
WE CAN - leann rimes	113134
MR ALIBI - maria wilson	113135

DANCE

MARIA - scooter	113030
JUST A LITTLE MORE LOVE - d guetta	113124
RUBBERNECKIN - elvis presley	112864
PRETTY GREEN EYES - ultra beat	112877
FLY ON THE WINGS OF LOVE - xtm	112705
RHYTHM IS A DANCER - snap vs stone	112485
LONELINESS - tomcraft	112576
SHAKE YOUR SHIMMY - porn kings vs	112463

ROCK

I BELIEVE IN A THING... - darkness	112972
SWEET CHILD O MINE - guns & roses	111258
BAT OUT OF HELL - meatloaf	111286
SOMEDAY - nickelback	112967
ENTER SANDMAN - metallica	111371
LIVING ON A PRAYER - bon jovi	111376
NOVEMBER RAIN - guns n roses	112596

HIP HOP

RIGHT THURR - chingy	112868
HOLIDAE IN - chingy ft. ludacris & snoop	113190
X GONNA GIVE IT TO YA - dmx	112617
FORGET ABOUT DRE - dr dre	111138
GOT SOME TEETH - obie trice	113041
SHAKE YA TAIL... - nelly, p diddy,	112839
HOW YOU WANT THAT - loon & kelis	112945
SABOTAGE - beastie boys	113016
SUGA SUGA - baby bash feat frankie j	113106
THE WAY YOU MOVE - outkast	113173

PARTY TIME

ONE STEP BEYOND - madness	111278
KUNG FU FIGHTING - carl douglas	111419
SUMMER OF 69 - bryan adams	112531
THE CHEEKY SONG - the cheeky girls	112313

CHILL OUT

CHILDREN - robert miles	111361
BRAVEHEART - dj sakin	111719
UNFINISHED SYMPATHY - m. attack	112437
FOR AN ANGEL - paul van dyk	111363

R & B

WHERE IS THE LOVE - black eyed peas	112890
BREATHE - blu cantrell feat. sean paul	112521
FRONTIN - pharrell williams feat jay z	112855
SO GONE - monica	112947
STRONGER THAN ME - amy winehouse	113096
OOH - mary j blige	113164
RAIN ON ME - ashanti	113175
NEVER LEAVE YOU - lumidee	112774
ANGEL - amanda perez	112796
SNAKE - r kelly feat tigger	112687
I BELIEVE I CAN FLY - r kelly	113060
ALL I HAVE - jennifer lopez feat ll cool j	112359

NU METAL

FEELING THIS - blink 182	113189
RED LIGHT GREEN LIGHT - limp bizkit ft.	113125
BRING ME TO LIFE - evanescence	112651
NUMB - linkin park	112886
GOING UNDER - evanescence	112968
THE ANTHEM - good charlotte	112493
FAINT - linkin park	112713

REGGAE

LIKE GLUE - sean paul	112785
TURN ME ON - kevin lyttle	113100
GET BUSY - sean paul	112634
NO WOMAN NO CRY - bob marley	111331
NO LETTING GO - wayne wonder	112690

URBAN

BABY BOY - big brovaz	112859
FIX UP LOOK SHARP - dizzee rascal	112937
BROKEN SILENCE - so solid crew	112969
MUNDIAN TO BACH KE - panjabi mc	112342

FOOTBALL

YOU'LL NEVER WALK... - liverpool	111351
MR BIG STUFF - SOCCER AM - j knight	112559
ARE YOU READY FOR LOVE - elton john	112869
MATCH OF THE DAY	111126
3 LIONS - baddiel & skinner	111494
COUNTRY ROAD - hermes house band	111571
GREAT ESCAPE - england	111354

RUGBY

SWING LOW SWEET CHARIOT	113108
IRELANDS CALL - simon casey	113112
FLOWER OF SCOTLAND - lulu	113113

GRUNGE

SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT - nirvana	112930
ALL MY LIFE - foo fighters	112913
ALIVE - pearl jam	112956
WOULD - alice in chains	113050
BLACK HOLE SUN - soundgarden	112912
ALL APOLOGIES - nirvana	112999
MONKEY WRENCH - foo fighters	112921
YOU KNOW YOU'RE RIGHT - nirvana	113073

CHRISTMAS

FROSTY THE SNOWMAN	111508
WISH IT COULD BE XMAS - wizard	111521
LET IT SNOW - dean martin	111526
ROCKIN AROUND - mel smith & kym	113146
HAVE YOURSELF A MERRY LITTLE...	111522
LITTLE DRUMMER BOY - david bowie	111527
ALL I WANT FOR XMAS... - chipmunks	113144
FAIRYTALE OF NEW YORK - pogues...	113148
WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS	113150
LAST CHRISTMAS - wham	111525
SO THIS IS CHRISTMAS - john lennon	111528
JINGLE BELLS - christmas	111529
RUDOLPH THE RED NOSED REINDEER	111530
SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN	111531
MERRY CHRISTMAS - slade	111552

CLASSIC TONES

IN DA CLUB - 50 cent	112440
SATISFACTION - benny benassi	112751
CRAZY IN LOVE - beyonce knowles	112707
HEAVEN - dj sammy	112229
DILEMMA - nelly feat. kelly rowland	112221
IGNITION - REMIX - r kelly	112642
LOSE YOURSELF - eminem	112289
YOU'RE A SUPERSTAR - love inc	112329
YEAR 3000 - busted	112344
MAKE LOVE - room 5	112465

KIDS TV

SCOOBY DOO	111142
BANANA SPLITS	112578
WINNIE THE POOH	111613
LOONEY TUNES	111151
ITCHY AND SCRATCHY SHOW	111301

THEMES

ONLY FOOLS AND HORSES	111369
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE	111121
EXORCIST	111871
ROCKY - jogging theme	112481
THE SIMPSONS	111132
PHOENIX NIGHTS	112364
AXEL F - beverley hills cop	111601
ROCKY	111141
THE A TEAM	111115
GOOD BAD AND THE UGLY	111181
MUPPETS	111134
SEX AND THE CITY	111673
JACKASS	112554
DIRTY DANCING	111249
MATRIX - rage against the machine	111848
STAR WARS - main theme	111125
THE TERMINATOR	111602
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Pictures

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251557

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251111

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